~~C736~~

KING ALFRED'S COLLEGE
WINCHESTER

To be returned on or before the day marked below:—

~~7 DEC 1999~~ 13 JUN 2008

2 MAR 2001

25 MAY 2001

19 NOV 2001

26 JAN 2004

WITHDRAWN FROM THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

PLEASE ENTER ON ISSUE SLIP:

AUTHOR PALMER

TITLE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE

ACCESSION No. 00733504

THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE

BY

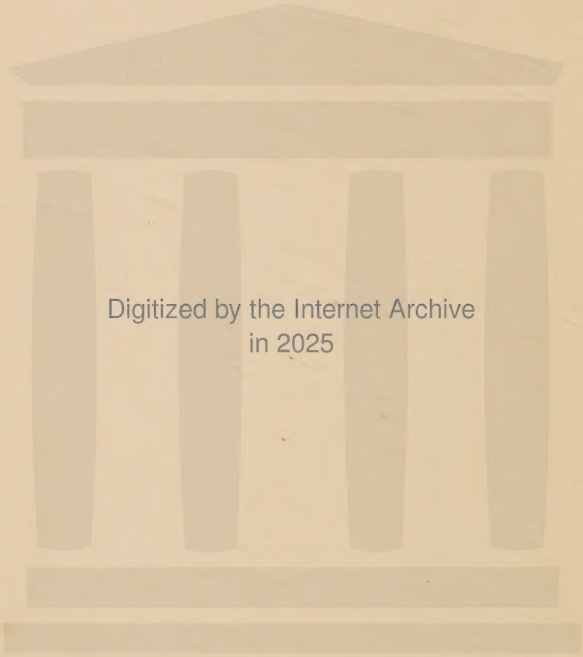
JOHN PALMER

LONDON
G. BELL & SONS LTD.
1913

KING ALFRED'S COLLEGE
WINCHESTER
W981432X
792
PAL
0073350

TO

GRANVILLE BARKER



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/theatricalnotes0000jose_r6r8

A POSTSCRIPT LETTER OF DEDICATION TO GRANVILLE BARKER

"My dear Granville Barker,—I will publish only one reason, among many, why I have asked you to accept this dedication. In the pages that follow I sometimes rather ostentatiously disagree with you. Might it not therefore be concluded that I do not love your work? This would not do at all.

"I wish you could have been induced to write this book yourself. It is no use putting us off with excuses as to a busy life. You, who have everything to do, can find time for everything. That you could easily find time for as good a book as has yet been written about the modern English theatre is shown by the present condition of my proof-sheets. My sensations on receiving them could only be comparable with what poor Diabelli must have felt when Beethoven returned him his funny little waltz in C major with thirty-three gigantic variations, including a double fugue.

"You cannot see my theatre of the future with rents at £8000 or £10,000 a year, plus £5000 a year for advertisements. But I said I was going to be very hopeful, and to see what I wanted to see; and

I have most carefully prepared for the financial prosperity of good work by bringing into our theatres of the future the really educated public which at present avoids them. As you say, it is all a question of numbers and prices. I see the profitable numbers; and you, soberly refusing to 'pawn your experience to your present pleasure,' do not.

"As to a missing chapter upon actors, and your entirely reasonable defence of yourself as the interpretative producer—well, of course you are right. Here I am fain 'to shuffle, to hedge and to lurch.' Do not bind me too strictly to the letter of this wilful exaggeration of a good case. Take me as uttering here no more than a vigorous protest against producers who aim at being creatively important, and against dramatic authors who are so far out of touch with the theatre as to be compelled to leave to others the task of fitting their plays to the resources and personalities of a particular cast. I allow that, after an author has written all that can be written, there still remains the job of adapting a particular representation to such players and scenes as are at hand. If the author himself can do this (owing to the long divorce between English letters and the English stage he seldom can), so much the better for his play. You say yourself that 'a producer is only necessary when the author cannot or will not do the job himself.' This is all I ask.

"You wonder that I say nothing at all about Masefield. I admit that it is a conspicuous omission; but I firmly believe that the less we say about

Masefield at this time the better it will be for the English theatre. Masefield must not be made self-conscious by too much talk about him. Let us not prematurely insist he is a genius, in opposition to those who prematurely insist he is merely a very clever fellow. His work, so far, shows that he may equally well be one or the other. I should like to see Masefield accomplish the prodigious literary feat of Hauptmann, who forced into the service of poetic vision the naturalism of his German contemporaries. Parts of *Nan* and of *Pompey* show that Masefield is quite possibly upon the track of this achievement; but he cannot yet be fitted into a dramatic history of the next ten years. If Masefield came, at all naturally, into this critical study of forces now at work, it would be as a further illustration of what you yourself so admirably typify in your naturalist-poetic productions of Shakespeare and in your uneasy hovering between *Anne Leete* and *The Voysey Inheritance*.

"Wycherley, remembering La Rochefoucauld, has said that people who compose dedications but begin the praise of others which ends in themselves. Perhaps that is my real motive in addressing you. I would have my readers know that you approve of me warmly enough in general to differ from me seriously in particular. Therefore I argue with you *coram publico*, and very proudly subscribe myself.—Yours ever sincerely,

JOHN PALMER.

"London, Covent Garden,
October 1913."

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	ix
I.	COMPETITORS	1
II.	THE FUTURE OF DRAMATIC CRITICS	18
III.	THE FUTURE OF THE PUBLIC	30
IV.	THE FUTURE OF PRODUCTION	43
V.	THE FUTURE OF THEATRICAL HABERDASHERS	57
VI.	THE FUTURE OF REPERTORY	74
VII.	THE FUTURE OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN	92
VIII.	THE FUTURE OF DRAMATIC NATURALISM	112
IX.	THE FUTURE OF MR. BERNARD SHAW	132
X.	THE FUTURE OF THE PRESENT DAY	155
XI.	THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH DRAMA	174

INTRODUCTION

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

POSTDATING history is well enough in conversation with a friend. To publish your predictions, to put them solemnly upon record, is another matter. But the game undoubtedly appeals. It is a game of chance, wherein the harder it is to win the more one is tempted to lose. The darker the future the more one is set upon reading it. The future of the English theatre is dark indeed. No better temptation could be offered a sporting prophet. Nobody has the faintest idea what the state of the English theatre will be five, ten, or twenty years hence—the dramatic critic or expert least of all. Some of us have our 'systems,' whereby we hope, as every practised gamester hopes, to cheat the bank and come out on the credit side. But it is well established that the gamester with a system is the soonest and most thoroughly ruined. He it is of whom the public will get most fun for their

shilling. The merely sensible outsider might conceivably keep his head, and withdraw without being deeply committed. The expert will probably go mad. He will prophesy. He will stake his reputation; and the onlookers will enjoy a vicarious excitement.

Ascending one's tripod a few lines of personal explanation may be in order. I might conclude each stage of the ensuing argument with wise regrets that the evidence, being inconclusive and contradictory, does not admit of any clear foretelling. But a prophet should not play for safety. I intend in this little book to make as many statements as possible as to which there is almost a moral certainty that they will all be conclusively disproved within the next ten years. The underlying principle of these predictions is that in prophesying one can only hit the single chance in a hundred of being right by bravely incurring the ninety-nine chances of being wrong. Table-turners summon spirits from the ends of heaven to tell them that potatoes are scarce, or that flannel next the skin is an unnecessary irritation; but this sort of thing has always seemed to me a needlessly roundabout way of arriving at the obvious. When one looks into the invisible, it should be with a fixed determination to see something out of the beaten way. A prophet should really be delirious and see things.

What precisely do I intend to see? It seems absurd for a person who is going to live in an

imaginary future not to make the most of his peculiar advantages. I have decided simply to see what I would wish to see. This is an essay in the optative mood. When one can make happen anything one pleases it is false economy to be bounded in a nutshell. There are, of course, limitations. Aristotle says somewhere that only an unreasonable man desires the impossible. I hope I am not unreasonable—that the things here devoutly to be wished are rationally likely to occur. If you find these prophesyings fantastic, and are tempted to wonder whether the author is always as serious as he seems, seriously ask yourself why you are reading a book on the future of the English theatre.

THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE

CHAPTER I

COMPETITORS

Is not a comedy a Christmas gambol or a tumbling trick ?
No, my good lord. It is more pleasant stuff.

WHAT precisely do we mean by the English theatre ? How shall we define it ? Are we to include the palaces of variety and the kinematograph ? Have we, perhaps, to prophesy that the theatre of the future is a music hall or a picture house ? What is this drain of the public, of which we hear so much, from the legitimate to the variety theatre ? What is this panic among our contemporaries that the modern public is incapable of sustained attention ; that plays must give way to ' turns ' and sketches ; that in a few years from now our theatres will be run by electricity ?

The theatre is, by statute, a building licensed for the performance of stage plays. What is a stage play is a delicate and difficult question, only suscep-

tible of definition in a court of law. It need not, in these pages, trouble us very much. A rough idea will do. For our purposes a stage play is the sort of thing presented in the West End of London by Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander and Mr. Granville Barker. The future of music halls, the future of variety, the future of picture palaces, the future of *ballet*, the future of musical comedy —these are topics of extraordinary interest; but they have very little to do with the future of the theatre. There will always be a public for stage plays. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the English people, who for three hundred years have steadily asked for stage plays, and paid for them, will not continue to do so. Shakespeare's business manager doubtless prophesied there would shortly be an end of stage plays. What with my Lord Leicester's masks and revels, the fascinations of the bear-warden and the travelling 'motions' of the countryside, Cuthbert Burbage must often have reflected that stage plays, though conceivably they might last his time, were not long for this vulgar world. A century later Farquhar complained that Gallic heels were too quick for English heads; that English comedy might as well go weep, the public having no further use for it. Yet the stage play lingered. A century later Macready complained of beasts and ballets, wondering how long the stage play would be able to stand up against the increasing frivolity of the people.

Let us be quite clear as to this question of com-

petition between stage plays and other forms of public amusement. Does this competition really exist? Put the case as between stage plays and their most dangerous rivals, the theatres of variety. Put it to yourself as an intelligent member of the public. Is there the least competition in your mind between the attraction of the *Coliseum* and the attraction of the *Kingsway*? You know perfectly well there is not. As a person of divine discourse looking before and after you book seats at the *Kingsway* several days ahead. You intend to go to the theatre, to amuse yourself for a definite three odd hours with a stage play. Your evening is surrendered to this particular form of enjoyment. Going to the theatre has associations and memories, hopes and fears, conditions of the soul and of the circulation, quite unlike any other piece of social ritual. It is part of the fun that you cut yourself off from the normal comforts of civilisation. You jam yourself into an uneasy chair; you are deprived of fresh air; you spend the intervals of scene-shifting in wondering whether you are sufficiently in training as an athlete to be able to get from your seat to the door; you are not allowed to talk, smoke, or fidget; it is useless wearing a champagne-coloured waistcoat because nobody can see you, or even desires to see you; nor are you able yourself to see who's who in the theatre. To compare this place with the *Tivoli* or the *Coliseum* is obviously absurd. You have come to the play; and the play is so emphatically the

thing that an English audience would resent the smallest innovation which interfered with its traditional discomforts and disabilities.

The theatre is no more in competition with the music hall than with the House of Commons. The mood in which one goes to a music hall is no more like the mood in which one goes to a theatre than the mood in which one goes to a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. The idea—not always the reality—of a music hall is of a club-room where conversation and the appreciation of a good cigar may be stimulated by entertainment. The best advertisement for a music hall is that it has a movable roof; that it is the only cool place on a hot day; that it is comfortable, with a reasonable tariff for wines and spirits. The important thing upon an evening given to the music hall is an excellent dinner well digested in agreeable company. The utmost one requires of a music hall is that it should help one to appreciate in retrospect and in present physical pink of condition that one has dined.

Let us look into these palaces of variety for a moment. Though we are not to be intimately concerned with them in discussing the future of the theatre, we must at least justify our refusal to regard them as competitors of the stage play. In 1912 there was a revolution; and it was predicted that this revolution would react disastrously upon what is technically known as the 'legitimate drama.' "Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land," said

the proprietors of music halls ; and Edgar flew into a panic. The revolution of 1912 had to do with the performance in music halls of sketches or stage plays short enough to be part of a variety bill. For years the Lord Chamberlain would not license stage plays for performance in a London music hall ; and, as everybody knows, no stage play can be performed in Great Britain till the Chamberlain has licensed it. People prophesied that, if the Lord Chamberlain allowed these little plays to be given in music halls, there was an end of the theatre. He was told that the music hall and the theatre were in competition ; that the music hall licensed for music and dancing had many advantages over the theatre licensed only for stage plays ; that signing a licence for the performance of a play at the *Palace* or the *Tivoli* would be signing the death-warrant of English drama. It is not possible here to tell the story in detail—how the music-hall proprietors asked for licences ; how they were refused ; how they defied the law ; how they were sued by the ' legitimate ' managers ; how they made illegal compacts wherein it was agreed that prosecutions should not be brought so long as the plays were very short ; how at last the Lord Chamberlain's hand was forced by the County Councils ; and how in January 1912 he began to license stage plays as part of a variety programme. The only aspect of this amazing tale which here concerns us is that in 1912 there was this theatre-shaking revolution—that the Lord Chamberlain began to license plays for performance

in the principal music halls, and that thereafter everything went on exactly as before.

For the prophets were confounded. What did this revolution really mean? Music halls and theatres were thereby put legally on a level. Theatres might relieve the tedium of legitimate drama with entertainers from the music hall; music halls might dignify their programmes with stage plays. Obviously, it was said, the distinction between the two would tend to disappear. These old competitors fighting for one another's public would combine in their respective programmes all the more attractive elements of both. The music hall would become a sort of theatre, the theatre would become a sort of music hall. But nothing of the kind has happened. The fallacy of all this melancholy prophesying was that it assumed a competition which did not really exist. There is a large public which never goes to a music hall: it is not in its character to do so. There is a larger public which, for a similar reason, never goes to a theatre. There is a public still larger that goes sometimes to one, sometimes to the other, but with a different intention, and in a different mood, in each case. If there were no music halls, and you wanted to go to a music hall, you would not go to a theatre instead; nor, if there were no theatres, and you wanted to go to a theatre, would you go to a music hall.

Many things will here be objected. Have not Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander and Mr.

Granville Barker appeared on the music-hall stage? Did not the English public first hear of Schnitzler at a music hall? Did not Professor Reinhardt make his English début at a music hall? Have not Sir James Barrie, Mr. Max Beerbohm, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Mr. Bernard Shaw written plays for the music hall? How, then, can it possibly be maintained that the future of the music hall has nothing to do with the future of the theatre?—that the music hall will not drive the theatre out of existence?

First let us reassert the difference between a theatre and a music hall, beginning with the simple fact that a music-hall programme has usually a dozen items. Take the now classic example of the first appearance in March 1913 of Sir George Alexander in vaudeville. He appeared at the *Palace* theatre. The play was by Mr. Max Beerbohm. It was timed for about half-past nine in the evening, and it lasted half an hour. The rest of the programme was suited to varying degrees of taste and intelligence, but it was fairly obvious that the only item which really challenged competition with the theatre was Mr. Max Beerbohm's play.

Mr. Beerbohm's play was, in fact, a typical instance of the settled policy of the big theatres of variety. It was in the bill for the same reason that Mr. Granville Barker and Professor Reinhardt had previously been there. It is clear from the mere examination of a bundle of variety programmes

that the first principle of a music-hall entertainment is that there may be something for everybody. Every degree of taste and intelligence has to be satisfied. Usually the main part of the programme is frankly of the music hall—' turns ' which quite clearly are not in any sense intended to compete with legitimate drama. But it has lately been the policy of the best managers to introduce into the second half of the evening an item intended to draw cultivated people—the latest ideas of a continental producer, a short play by a celebrated author, potted drama from Sicily and so forth. These are the items which give plausibility to an assumption that music halls compete with the theatre, and improve at the theatre's expense. But there is no real justification for this view. These ' turns ' for the cultivated are invariably timed from about nine o'clock to ten. They are intended for people whose important function of the evening was to dine ; people who come in late to ' end up at a music hall.' The public for which Mr. Beerbohm's short play, or Mr. Granville Barker's ' Anatol ' sketch, was intended was not a public which had deliberately measured a stage play at the *Palace* against a stage play at the *Kingsway*, weighing the artistic attractions of a variety programme against the artistic attractions of legitimate drama. It was a public which wanted to round off the evening somewhere —preferably at a place where it could be sure of a good thing after nine o'clock. In a word, it wanted

a music hall. The idea of a theatre had not entered its head.

Actor-managers know this. Sir George Alexander has always supported free trade in amusement. All the most prominent actors have already appeared on the variety stage. They know well enough that no such competition exists as the alarmists describe. Sir George Alexander would not have appeared at the *Palace* had he thought that thereby he was aiming a blow at the *St. James's*. He knows that there will always be a public for an evening at the play which no music hall can take away, even though he himself is fitted into a music-hall programme. The managers' idea of the real relation of the music hall and the theatre is well illustrated in the statutes of the revolution of 1912. Each party saw that the whole question turned upon smoking in the theatre. The legitimate managers, with infallible good sense, saw that the contrast between music halls and theatres, the psychologic rift, was in this question of smoking. A music hall was a place to which people of all sorts came to be comfortable, to attend to the things that appealed to them, and to tolerate with half a mind the things which did not. A theatre was a place wherein people were bent upon the play, where the audience was united in its attention. The rules of a theatre or music hall are not arbitrary fiats of the manager. They are an interpretation of the wishes of the public. Smoking is allowed in music halls, because a

music-hall audience is in the mind to smoke. Smoking is not allowed in the theatre, because the audience is in the mind to abhor anything so *dégagé*. The regulations as to smoking, unimportant in themselves, are excellent symbols of a frame of mind.

Let us further pursue this root distinction between the playgoing and the music-hall habit of attention. It will explain why some of the best work upon the modern stage is done at the variety theatres and enable us to measure the probable influence of the variety theatre upon the future of dramatic art. The music-hall programme, as we have seen, is intended to appeal in its respective items to different sections of the public. Only one thing is required of the candidate for admission. The aim of the impresario is to be sure that everything is the best of its kind. The playgoing public does not smoke. It requires illusion, and illusion requires you to be intent. The music-hall public does smoke. It does not require illusion, but entertainment. They are not intent; they are detached and critical. The items are a successive exhibition of technical virtuosity, whether it be juggling with a dozen oranges, playing tunes upon a cigar box, or eating a pack of cards. The public looks keenly for the perfection of craft.

This holds not alone of the distinctively music-hall items; but of productions legalised at the revolution of 1912. Already Europe is ransacked

for its latest and best. Mr. Granville Barker naturalises Viennese comedy at the *Palace*; Professor Reinhardt and his men from Berlin, with a revolving stage specially constructed, deliver to the English public their last word upon the art of production. The music-hall impresario is alert, experimental, bold in innovation, continually feeling his way with a critical public—or rather with a number of critical publics, each wanting to be competently entertained. That his audience is not homologous, that he is appealing to different sections in different ways, makes him readier to take risks, to adventure more boldly than the purveyor of legitimate drama. This accounts for so many new and important movements and influences coming into the legitimate theatre by way of the music hall. We need not fear that the future of the theatre is thereby threatened, that its identity is in danger of being lost owing to the competition and influence of the music hall. The legitimate theatre will doubtless borrow from the music hall anything it requires for its ends and purposes, as it has already borrowed Herr Schnitzler and Professor Reinhardt. But the fundamental distinction remains. There is a music-hall atmosphere and a music-hall public. There is a playgoing atmosphere and a playgoing public. Each institution accurately fits a need of the community and a mood of the visitor. If playgoing should ever decay in this country, it will not be owing to the competition of an entirely different

institution; nor, because a new music hall is opened, does it follow that an old theatre will be shut.

This equally applies to musical comedy. There is equally a gulf between the moods and requirements of a musical comedy audience and the legitimate playgoer, as between the legitimate playgoer and the frequenters of a music hall. The *disjecta membra* of a musical comedy are distinctly analogous to the variety programme (particularly since the variety programme has taken to including the musical *revue*); and though to smoke is not the custom at *Daly's* and the *Gaiety* there is a rough identity of mood between the public at a music hall and the public at a musical comedy. There is no real competition between *Daly's* and the *St. James's*. Legitimate drama is virtually unaffected by the fact that there exists an enormous public regularly supporting musical comedy simultaneously in half a dozen London houses. If musical comedy were next week utterly to disappear from London, the legitimate theatre would hardly be conscious that anything of importance had happened. This does not mean that the musical comedy public is a water-tight section of the people which nowhere coincides with the public for legitimate drama; but it does mean that visiting a musical comedy is a different thing from visiting a play. It supposes a different mood and a different intention in the visitor.

Musical comedy has even less influence than the

music hall on the legitimate theatre. The music-hall entrepreneur, raking the world for artistic novelties, occasionally nets an idea that has an enormous influence on the progress of legitimate drama. But musical comedy has contributed nothing of value. It occasionally happens that players pass from one *métier* to the other. Many talented players—Miss Ethel Irving, for instance—have done so. It also is painfully true that much of the expensive vulgarity of a method of production already virtually exhausted has crept into the legitimate theatre from the musical comedy stage. The production, for instance, of Shakespeare at West End theatres owes much to musical comedy at the *Gaiety* and to its Christmas varieties at *Drury Lane*. But there is no fundamental connection, no regular artistic give-and-take, between the two. Musical comedy can be neglected with even less apology than the music hall in looking into the future of the theatre.

There remains the kinematograph. It would be quite unnecessary even to mention the kinematograph were it not for the very serious nonsense this topic has inspired. What are the facts? The trade in electric pictures is an especially tempting kind of speculation. Buildings of all sorts and sizes can be run up, films rented, the few necessary operators and attendants paid, with an expenditure ridiculously small compared with the ordinary prices in this country of a music-hall entertainment. There has been a rush—which still continues—of

small men and big men to share in a very profitable traffic in cheap amusement. Speculating in electric pictures is no more reprehensible than speculating in skating rinks or patent medicines; only these people must needs talk. First they talked philanthropy. Desiring to speculate for seven days a week, they persuaded the London County Council to allow them to work on Sunday. The arrangement was that Sunday profits should go to charitable institutions after Sunday expenses were paid. But, when the time came for balance-sheets and reports, it was found that the kinematograph companies, laying up treasure in heaven, had contrived to lay up even more treasure upon earth. Some of the more reputable charitable institutions withdrew from the arrangement in disgust.

Then the companies talked morality. Mr. G. A. Redford had just resigned his post as censor of stage plays. People were asking at the time why, if stage plays had to be inspected and warranted free from indecency, blasphemy, libel, and so forth, and why, if music halls had to be licensed and controlled by local authorities, picture houses should escape. The kinematograph proprietors accordingly invited Mr. Redford, late Examiner of Plays for the Lord Chamberlain, to become their chief inspector of films. Mr. Redford, at a reasonable salary, became guarantor to the public that all things offered in a picture palace were respectable, clean, reverent, wholesome and morally elevating. No more was heard

of a public censorship of electric theatres; and we were soon assured that the relations between Mr. Redford and the film proprietors were admirably harmonious. Mr. Redford had had long practice as the Lord Chamberlain's examiner in accurately measuring the functions of a public censor. He now had an even better opportunity for censorcraft. It had been his duty through calumny and misrepresentation for the best years of his life to stand before the public of the Lord Chamberlain's theatres as the salaried guarantor of their respectability. He now resumed his good offices on behalf of a wider public. The pretences were similar, though they were less discreetly veiled.

The companies next talked art and education. It was even suggested that the kinematograph should be used in public schools to stimulate the imagination of young people. This, as to which a good deal was very pertinently said at the time by Dr. Lyttelton (to the immense indignation of the speculators), is rather beside the future of the theatre. But the kinematograph as theatrical fine art is more to the point. No one has suggested that the phonograph or metrostyle has added to the arts. They are admirable machines for recording and reproducing the achievements of an artist; but no one has ventured to suggest that these instruments are artistically creative. Nevertheless, the claim is seriously made for the kinematograph. Possibly the speculators took their cue from Mr. Bernard Shaw's ingenious defence of photography

as a fine art, in whose appreciation of Coburn's pictures is matter and impertinency mixed.

The claim is based ultimately not upon the kinematograph's ability to reproduce enacted scenes or events of history, but upon its ability to create false illusions—carefully invented absurdities arranged by means of pictures ingeniously faked. A motor-car will jump a precipice of a thousand feet, plunge into the sea, and be converted into a submarine or a flying-fish. These pictures are often enormously clever and diverting, but their manufacture clearly bears no relation to the activities of an artist. We are interested in a surprising perversion of the laws of matter—in an exhibition of scientific conjuring. This equally applies to faked pictures of heaven and hell and to the contorted mummery whereby the story of Christ is flung upon the screen.

Ten years hence it would not be necessary to talk at all about the kinematograph. But, in the present boom, when actors are in a panic of starvation, and when critics are talking nonsense about art of the film, it is strictly necessary to dissociate the future of the theatre from the future of kinoplasticon. There is no competition. The picture palace has tapped a vast public looking for cheap amusement. It threatens to slay utterly the travelling show, nigger minstrels, the panorama and circus. It has won a permanent place for itself as an item of vaudeville. But we shall in a few years hear little of its competition with the theatre. Nor will

these stuffy and stupefying picture palaces be able for long to maintain themselves in their hundred thousands. The limitations of this form of entertainment, already eked out in the larger palaces with music-hall varieties, will soon appear; and the interest even of the threepenny public be exhausted.

CHAPTER II

THE FUTURE OF DRAMATIC CRITICS

The censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

NOWHERE is the English habit of disguising harsh reality with agreeable pretences so admirably illustrated as in the English theatre. A whole etiquette of polite understandings has been ingeniously contrived, not of course with intent to deceive the simple public, but from a natural human desire that the harmless necessary sepulchres of modern life may be decent and fair. Fictions which enable whole thousands of estimable people to play their several parts with dignity and self-respect have an undoubted moral value. They are the spiritual assets of a commonwealth. There will always be rude facts, vulgar and uncomfortable, at the bottom of every civilisation in all its stages. The political and social genius of a people consists in the successful discovery of beautiful conventions whereby rude facts are ignored. Indeed, it sometimes has happened that, by the mere virtue of ignorance, the facts themselves have disappeared, pretence usurping reality.

It is agreed that actor-managers are men of art, living only to express themselves beautifully; that with infinite pains they seek out the finest plays of their time; that, having completed their arrangements to produce one of these plays, they invite to the theatre a number of gentlemen recognised as experts on all that touches dramatic art; that these gentlemen pass upon the play in question independent, fearless and extremely valuable opinions; that these opinions are intended to help the manager in the progress of his art; that they are received by him in chastened gratitude and a modest poverty of spirit. It is a very beautiful fiction. The critic who receives without an access of sincere emotion the familiar note in which this manager or that "has the honour to invite his presence" at a first production; who does not attend first nights with a sense of dignity, responsibility and general elevation of spirit, has no right to the gibus of his profession.

But in a serious discussion of the future of the theatre it is not possible to linger on these admirable pretences to the exclusion of quite another group of facts, not entirely irrelevant. Theatrical productions cost money. Sometimes the money actually belongs to the producer or man of art. We may assume without cynicism that the person who finds the money will not be disappointed if the investment turns out to be a good one. Sir Herbert Tree quite frankly asked the Censorship Committee of 1909 to regard him not only as a

man of art, but as a man of business. How far it is possible to combine business with art, to produce theatrical masterpieces and to make money out of being a genius, is not a question to detain us here. The point that now concerns us is that actor-managers have something to sell; and that they advertise it.

Let us, then, pretend (it is unreasonable to pretend only what is beautiful) that managers are business men; and that proprietors of newspapers are not averse from receiving revenue. Let us put the worst possible construction upon this hypothesis. We will be sordid. What would be likely to happen arguing from the assumption that proprietors of entertainment and proprietors of newspapers are each anxious to obtain the greatest possible amount of worldly advantage out of their relations with one another?

The position of an editor or proprietor of a newspaper is delicate and difficult. He likes to receive revenue from the advertisements of a theatre. He also likes to be invited, in the person of his dramatic critic, to the first performances of plays. For a mysterious reason not yet investigated the report of a dramatic performance is good copy. The public likes to read an account of new plays as they appear. It does not greatly matter that these accounts should be well written, or wisely conceived, or contain anything beyond bald résumés of the plot, with a few perfunctory nominations of the players. The public will read any

sort of paragraph about the theatre, and it is the business of a competent editor to print as many of these paragraphs as he can find a reasonable excuse for writing. Definitely he does not, as a business man, want to quarrel with the actor-managers if he can avoid it. He desires to lose neither a permanent source of revenue in advertisements, nor a permanent fount of copy in performances of plays, programmes, plans for the season, personal reminiscences and occasional banquet celebrations. It is to his interest that the relations between himself, his representatives, and the actor-managers should be harmonious and agreeable.

What is the position of the actor-manager, likewise regarded as a simple man of business? As a man of business he wants first of all to induce the public to come to his theatre. To this end he inserts in all the principal newspapers an advertisement of his play, with particulars as to the time and place of performance. Imagine his feelings, still as a simple man of business, if on the day after the first performance of his new play he reads, in the journal of a proprietor he has actually paid to advertise it, an eloquent half column of advice to playgoers on no account to visit his theatre! It will here be objected that he has invited criticism upon a work of art, and that he is only too happy to be helpfully corrected. But for the time being we are leaving this out of account. As a man of business he has invited

representatives of the press to his theatre, intending that they shall be favourably impressed with the quality of his entertainment. He wants a half-page or quarter-page advertisement of his play in return for a free seat at the theatre.

What would be the natural consequences of a purely business relation between the newspaper proprietor and the actor-manager? What is likely to happen, supposing all questions of high art, personal delicacy and polite convention are put aside?

First, we should not expect any very violent quarrel between the two august parties — the theatre manager and the newspaper proprietor. Neither, as a simple man of business, could afford it. A manager must have his advertisements in all newspapers of a respectable circulation; and a newspaper proprietor must not offend the public, which looks for descriptive reports of the theatre. Nevertheless, we should expect occasional friction —perhaps occasional ill-feeling. The representative of a newspaper might not invariably agree with the actor-manager as to the merits of a particular play; and though the agreeable pretences already described would not be so far ignored by the actor-manager as to make him regard his critic as a paid advertiser and panegyrist, yet he might, as a man of business, quite justifiably grumble, and even darkly protest that his hospitality had been abused. He might even go to the extreme of shutting out a pertinacious defamer of his ware;

and, in a fit of irritation, he might threaten to cut off advertisements and tickets. Throw back your memory for the last three years. Have you never read articles, letters to the editor and interviews with managers, wherein these grievances and threats have broken out into public print? While we are thus inquiring into the relations of actor-managers and the proprietors of newspapers as simple men of business, it is not irrelevant to recall that just these probable results of just these vulgar considerations are common knowledge of the reading public.

How, conceivably, could friction be minimised between the two august parties to this likely quarrel? A great deal would seem to depend upon the choosing of critics and upon their management. The proprietor of a newspaper, as a man of business, would naturally choose a critic who was unlikely to be too exacting, too far uplifted from the level of the public whose wishes he was expected to interpret, too remote in his mental attitude from the actor-managers whose work it was hoped he would appreciate. Critics full of awkward ideas about art, critics with a fierce missionary zeal, would tend quietly to disappear from newspapers of enormous circulation. We should expect the sincerest criticism, not in daily newspapers with enormous circulations, but in weekly reviews. Men of mind who happened to find themselves upon a daily paper of influence and distinction would probably refuse to be very

serious, concealing their contempt for this or that thing in modern dramatic art with a playful indifference. Reasonably we might assume that a newspaper proprietor would count himself happy in a dramatic representative who without being too big a fool for his public was unlikely to be troublesome to an actor-manager. Have these reasonable expectations no relation with facts as the intelligent public has observed them?

What, on the other hand, should we expect of actor-managers, as simple men of business, in their dealings with the critics? It would clearly be agreeable to all parties if dramatic critics were personally known to actors and actresses, if they were not altogether excluded from the Green-Room Club, if they occasionally met at dinner the people with whom they should never very violently disagree. Actor-managers of superlative distinction would probably regard newspaper-men as politicians and most people of reputation regard them — as a convenient nuisance. They would not, in self-respect, seek them out, or attempt deliberately to corrupt their judgment. But they would not be unnecessarily rude. Little courtesies, not costing them too dear, would not be omitted.

Perhaps it is now conceivable how a compromise between art and business, between the polite fictions with which we started and the vulgar reality suggested as a possible small ingredient, is in practice arrived at by the parties.

What will become of this compromise? What

is the future of dramatic criticism? In 1920, about four years after the opening of the National Memorial Theatre, it will be realised by the directors that the intelligent public yearly attracted in ever-increasing numbers to the best plays of the best authors have neither use nor respect for newspaper reports of their proceedings. Some unusually outrageous press campaign will precipitate a crisis, and there will be a revolution. Mr. Granville Barker—say—will stage a comedy by William Shakespeare, and be flatly accused in the newspapers of wilful oddness and uncouth perversion of the text. Some one, perhaps, will take the opportunity of a Strindberg festival to proclaim the morbidity of the Scandinavian mind; and begin a press agitation in favour of the revival of the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain. (The censorship of the Lord Chamberlain will have been statutorily abolished by a Unionist Government in 1917.) Whatever the immediate occasion, the directors of the National Memorial Theatre will lose patience; decline to continue their polite understanding with the press; and lay it down as a principle that critics must come to the theatre as ordinary members of the public. They will point out that they need no further advertisement of the National Theatre than a simple publication of the time and description of its performances; that they will be very grateful for public or private criticism of their methods, plays, players and producers; but that they wish definitely to put a term to the convention that

regular newspaper critics of the old school are anything but a nuisance to the managers or to the public. There will be an uproar. Every one will predict the bankruptcy of the National Memorial Theatre; and for a short time the chief proprietors of newspapers will refuse to insert their announcements. But the public will protest against the newspapers; the National Theatre will fill more persistently than ever; and the press, as its function is, will accept the popular view. Thereupon all the more self-respecting managers will follow the directors of the National Theatre in excluding representatives of the press; and all the more self-respecting authors will make it a condition of the performance of their plays that no free tickets are issued for the first performance. It will soon be quite obvious that dramatic criticism (old style) was a waste of the public's time; of the newspapers' money and space; of the theatres' accommodation—besides entailing unnecessary mental suffering and degradation upon a thoroughly respectable, intelligent and conscientious body of men.

By the end of 1921 dramatic criticism, as we understand it to-day, will have disappeared. There will be a new school of critics. Newspapers and reviews will keep in touch with the theatre as with every other sort of artistic achievement. Dramatic criticism will be written by men of leisure, not, as journalism, in the hurried small hours of the morning, but as essays in reflection upon the tendencies of the modern stage, considered in relation to the

whole body of English fine art. It will no more be considered necessary by newspaper proprietors to notice a play the morning after production than it is considered necessary to notice a book on the day of publication, and no more necessary to notice all the plays than it is necessary to notice all the books.

The change will not be affected without noise and scandal. There will be three main bodies of opinion. First, there will be the old brigade, honestly believing in the old polite fictions of to-day. Second, there will be a group of moderates who think the old system should be continued with safeguards. Third, there will be the root-and-branch abolitionists. The first group will be utterly disabled from the moment it is perceived that the National Theatre continues to fill despite its quarrel with the press. The big fight will be between the Centre Party and the Extreme Left.

In the height of it will issue from the literary adviser of the National Theatre (an ingenious man of peace) a pamphlet entitled *Via Media : A Plea for the Decent Restraint of Critics.* Briefly, he will propose that critics should continue to be invited to the theatre for first-night performances ; but that they should be required on entering the theatre to sign a paper. This paper will contain an assertion on the part of the signatory (1) that he is the member of no club or social group where men and women professionally interested in the theatre are in the habit of congregating ; (2) that he is personally

unknown to any of the actors, authors, or managers interested in the failure or success of the play he is intending to criticise; (3) that he has never received from any manager interested in, or in competition with, the theatre he is attending any sum on account of royalties for any play, or part of a play, or scenario; (4) that he is entirely unsusceptible to the personal charm of any actress taking part in the production, and has never bought, or felt the least inclination to buy, her picture postcard; (5) that he has never intentionally penetrated beyond the stage door, or visited any portion of a building licensed for theatrical productions except the portion intended for the accommodation of an audience; (6) that he has practically demonstrated his capacity to maintain himself in modest competence by honest employment entirely unconnected with the theatre or the press.

This pamphlet of the literary adviser will please neither the Right nor the Left. As the way is with ingenious men of peace, the author will draw upon himself the heaviest censure of both the extreme parties. But the scheme will actually break, not upon the vast mass of opposing argument, but upon a practical difficulty. It will be pointed out that no dramatic critic can be found able, without flat perjury, to sign such a document. Vainly the literary adviser will urge that under his scheme a regular system of honest, competent and wholesome criticism is assured. The critics he will require will not exist. The Right will

continue to argue that the literary adviser's pamphlet is a gross libel upon an honourable profession. The Left will continue to argue that it is a mere palliative. Meantime, the chief director, consulting his knowledge of the theatre and of the press as a shrewd and practical man of affairs, will quietly put the literary adviser's pamphlet into a pigeon-hole, and issue instructions to his acting-manager that no further free tickets are to be issued.

The meaning of this revolution will more clearly appear when we have considered the future of the English public. For the public has a future. The future of the public will help us to realise how it was inevitable that the director of the National Memorial Theatre should be successfully able to take this momentous step of abolishing free invitations.

CHAPTER III

THE FUTURE OF THE PUBLIC

You would play upon me ; you would seem to know my stops ; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery ; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass ! And there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ ; yet cannot you make it speak.

. . . . . .

Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel ?
By the mass, and 'tis a camel, indeed.
Methinks 'tis like a weasel.
It is backed like a weasel.
Or like a whale ?
Very like a whale . . .
They fool me to the top of my bent !

IT is too readily assumed that the public is incapable of reason. If this were as true as is commonly supposed it would be of little use discussing the future of the theatre. Stage plays are performed in public for the delectation of an audience ; and, whether one be Shakespeare or Brandon Thomas, one must strive to please it every day. If the actor-manager confines himself to the office of Master Peaseblossom, spending his years scratching the head of Bottom transformed, prophesying is in vain.

To assume that the public is incapable of reason

is a derivative of the popular fallacy that the public invariably gets what it wants. The public supports a foolish play. It is therefore assumed that this foolish play is at all points what the public requires. Managers, proceeding on this hypothesis, seek out other foolish plays as nearly like it as possible. More often than not these other foolish plays dismally fail. The managers are puzzled; but still persist in assuming that the first foolish play pleased for its folly. The public, they say, is incapable of reason; but it is filled with obstinate and unaccountable fancies.

Public taste is unplumbed and mysterious. It is not for me to pretend to understand why one play succeeds where another fails; nor would I tell it in Gath if I had found a clue. A person who could discover anything about public taste would not be writing books about the theatre. He would be employed by actor-managers at an enormous salary to choose plays. In default of any such infallible scientific analyst managers fall into two classes—men of business who aim quite simply at hitting the public rage one time in ten, and men of art who go their own way, hoping it is also the way of the public. These two classes of manager shade off imperceptibly into one another. Business and art are ingeniously combined in all sorts of ways. But these are the two main classes.

The distinction between them is of the first importance for the future of the English theatre. Let us consider each of them a little more par-

ticularly. There are two ways of treating the English public. You may conceive it in the image of Bottom desiring only to be scratched; as a spoiled child wishing only to be humoured. You may wait apprehensively upon every indication of its appetite and temper. You may be perpetually afraid of being too refined, subtle, clever, elevated, or profound for its understanding and fancy. You may spend unfailing ingenuity, vast sums of money, stores of cunning, unending foresight and brilliant conjecture in attempting to anticipate its whims and wishes. You may put aside your artistic conscience, do perpetual violence to your intelligence, be ever ready to dance when the public pipes to you; and at the end of it all you may retire into bankruptcy, having made and lost a hundred fortunes. Is this a picture of imagination? Has it any relation to the procedure of a certain sort of actor-manager to-day? Have we never heard of the actor who, calling himself a servant of the public, is in private hardly prepared to admit that the public is much better than a violent fool?

But there is another way. Without calling yourself a servant of the public, or troubling in the least about the public taste, you may produce plays to please yourself. At the back of your head there may be the shadow of an idea that the public is neither so foolish nor unaccountable as its servants proclaim; that possibly if you follow your conscience, choose that which is good

in your own eyes, be never afraid of being too excellent and original for your auditors—that then you may not only do better for the sweetness and favour of your name than managers of another school, but likewise be more respected and favoured by the public, and less likely to come within prospect of a base material disaster. Suppose the public, like the fourteenth-century commons on Blackheath, are asking, not for a servant of their base desires, but for a leader. Suppose the public is willing to be educated, to be led into an appreciation of what is beautiful, to be constrained and disciplined into love of something perhaps a little higher than its grasp at present reaches, a little clearer than its intelligence has so far penetrated. Suppose it has been the office of all who truly profess the arts, not slavishly to accept the conceptions of the vulgar, but to impose their own. Suppose that men are hungry for dreams and visions; that they are ready to snatch at anything that seems as though it came to them with authority.

Which manager, of these, is the manager of the future? Let us look merely at the evidence. We are shortly to discover that the days of Sir Pandarus are numbered. The manager who, with the wisdom of a fool, waits on the popular breeze, whose principle of management allows him cheerfully to lose a hundred per cent. upon four trashy plays in succession so long as the fifth trashy play happens mysteriously to do his business—this sort of

manager will in 1920 have been managed out of the land by men who equally respect themselves and their supporters. This prophesying is not delirious. There are facts.

Let us, for our period of examination, go no further back than the beginning of this present century. Consider Mr. Bernard Shaw. We are not here concerned with the quality or future of his plays, but with two plain circumstances of his biography: (1) that he has never made the smallest concession to the public with the idea of thereby making himself more popular and agreeable; (2) that he is one of the most successful dramatic authors of the present day. He is more persistently before the public than Mr. Peaseblossom. He is well able to make his own and his producer's fortune. The production of his first plays was an essay in the new principle of not caring a jot as to what the public wants. Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker at the *Court* theatre in 1904 knew what they wanted themselves, and gave the public an opportunity of agreeing. They realised that, if the public were given time, it would discover and support a good thing honestly offered at a fair price. It is now found that honesty, if it does not invariably pay a hundred per cent., will with average good luck pay twenty to fifty, and will in any case keep well upon the windy side of bankruptcy.

It is here suggested, not that the public is always right, but that the public is not always wrong;

that managers who regard it as incapable of reason, and persistently play down to it, are more likely to come to a bad end than their honest competitors ; that to choose plays for their merit alone, with no reference to what the public supported last year, or is likely to support next year, is better policy than trying to measure the public taste. It is now being realised—and when we have a National Theatre it will be realised even more clearly—that the secret of successful management is to give the public the best in your power, confident that it is safer to be too delicate or too profound than not to be delicate or profound enough. During the last two years most of the really successful plays were staged, either experimentally by enterprising men of mind, or in the regular way of production by managers of the new school. Eliminate plays like *Bunty Pulls the Strings* and *Rutherford and Son* (plays which slipped on to the commercial stage by way of experimental matinées), and plays like *Milestones* and *The Great Adventure* (plays which were produced by Mr. Denis Eadie and Mr. Granville Barker)—eliminate plays such as these, and the average of financial success of the London theatres is considerably reduced. The artistic merit of these plays is not here under discussion. They are taken merely as instances that the logic of events, apart from the principles of right reason, points to the elimination of the manager whose principle it is, not to produce plays he likes (suffering his policy of management to be determined

by independent artistic conviction), but to follow the popular breeze.

There is an admirable illustration of this argument in the career of Mr. Stanley Houghton. Mr. Stanley Houghton, an amateur of the stage in Manchester (an amateur in the sense that Congreve was an amateur), wrote two plays already celebrated in the immediately recent history of the English theatre. The first of these amateur plays was *Hindle Wakes*. *Hindle Wakes* came deviously to the London stage by way of Miss Horniman's Repertory players and the Stage Society. It was secured by Mr. Cyril Maude for the *Playhouse*. It had quite a respectable run in London, a *succès d'estime* in all the repertory cities of Great Britain, and a *succès de scandale* at Oxford, which was at that time actively dissociating itself from the intellectual and artistic ambitions of the English theatre. The second of these plays was *The Younger Generation*. *The Younger Generation* was first played in London at Notting Hill Gate. It was afterwards secured by Mr. Frederick Harrison, who made such a success of it that it had to be turned out of the *Haymarket* into the *Comedy* before the run was exhausted. These two plays were Mr. Houghton's sincere contribution to English drama—written without thought of the public. *The Younger Generation*, more especially, contained none of those things which experts upon public taste tell us are indispensable to a play with money in it. It was 'slight' without being merry. But it succeeded.

The next we heard of Mr. Houghton was that he had come to London, and that he was writing a play for Mr. Arthur Bourchier. He was no longer an amateur writing to please himself. He was a professional author writing for an audience at the *Garrick* theatre. The play was produced; and the public was invited to come for a hundred nights. But the public did not go. *Trust the People*, expressly written for the public, did not please the public. Mr. Houghton's new play contained everything the public is supposed to like. All the ingredients of a really popular play were handled with quite an astonishing neatness and dexterity. If Mr. Houghton had deliberately intended to tickle his audience from the front row of the stalls to the back row of the gallery, he could not more faithfully have served the public taskmaster. But in vain was the net spread. The public would not be caught. *Trust the People*, upon which Mr. Peaseblossom would feel at any time justified in putting his money, significantly failed, whereas *The Younger Generation*, for which Mr. Peaseblossom would have predicted a dead loss, succeeded. Mr. Houghton, being a man of quick perception, saw it was a mistake to get into touch with the English public; that nothing pleases it so much as to be ignored. It was soon reported that he had gone away to Paris to forget what the English public was like.

These tiresome details go conclusively to show that the public more often wants the best work

of the best authors than what Mr. Peaseblossom imagines it is likely to want. In ten years' time this chapter will happily be quite unnecessary. Mr. Peaseblossom will then be extinct. It will then be recognised that the public is wiser than the public thinks; that he who would save his public must be prepared to lose it; that the public will only follow people who are ready to lead it.

Here is additional reason why dramatic criticism of the sort with which we are to-day familiar will be extinct in 1920. Dramatic criticism to-day is really a part of the general conspiracy to pretend that the public is incapable of reason. It is part of the polite fiction about dramatic critics, which we have already examined, that they lead the public taste; that they help to decide what plays the public shall see. The public being quite unable to decide what it wants, the dramatic critics are supposed to perform a useful service in helping it to make up its mind. They are also supposed to reconcile the public to what is new and original; to secure a hearing for strange prophets; to stand between dramatic art and the vulgar as experts and interpreters.

This agreeable pretence must vanish like the rest, once it is proven by experience that the public will not be led by the nose, even though an angel from heaven offers to be its conductor. It is already dimly conjectured by intelligent managers (1) that no degree or extent of eulogy in the press will make the fortunes of a play that the public

does not want; (2) that nothing a critic can say will keep the public out of a theatre once it has made up its mind to be there. These convictions will become clearer and more embracing when, with a National Theatre continuously producing plays of all sorts, we are able more scientifically to observe the habits and temperament of the playgoing classes. One thing very definitely will emerge—that when it comes to leading public opinion experts are by the nature of things incapable.

Consider again for a moment, before looking into the future, the progress of the English dramatic movement associated with Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Granville Barker. At what stage of it were the expert leaders of public opinion of the slightest use? It used to be said that no play could succeed on the English stage in which the speeches were more than ten lines long; that no English audience could possibly endure a play in which religion entered, or politics, or social economy; that no play could succeed without a romantic love interest, a plot which could be described on half a sheet of notepaper and a happy ending. Already a large public has discovered it can do without any of these things. Who taught it to do without them? Where are the leaders of opinion who brought the English public into the English theatre from the byways? Who told the public in 1904 that Mr. Bernard Shaw would be the darling of playgoers in 1913? Let him appear.

The true enormity of the fallacy that the expert

sees most of the game is quickly realised if one attends regularly the meetings of this society or that, dedicated to the progress of dramatic art. If you have anything really original to say, declare it in Hyde Park or in Battersea. Do not breathe a word of it to the Incorporated Stage Society, or the Pioneers, or the Oncomers. The pretence as to these advanced societies is that they are looking for genius, anxious and ready to embrace it ; that if you are an original author you will find here the help and encouragement denied you in the common streets. But, as every one knows who has had anything to do with people or societies claiming special knowledge and a labelled enthusiasm, when anything outside the limited expert experience of an expert body comes along—that is to say, when anything comes along which is really important and revolutionary—the expert body is far more thoroughly at a loss than a jury of twelve plain men. The Incorporated Stage Society, for instance, seating more dramatic authors, critics and actors to the cubic inch than any other institution in Europe, has during the last few years had two splendid opportunities of exhibiting the true critical worth of an expert assembly. It has had an opportunity of welcoming the first plays in English of August Strindberg and of Anton Tchekoff. The reception of these plays by this society and by the leaders of public opinion showed quite conclusively that here were the true lineal descendants of the experts who turned down Ibsen in the 'nineties.

It still remains for the public to put this right, as in due time, when the experts have been decorously extinguished, it will proceed to do. The position of experts and of societies like the Incorporated Stage Society to-day may be summed up in a single statement which in the further course of these pages will appear indubitable. There are two really magnificent periods in the history of the English theatre—the period of Elizabethan tragedy and the period of Carolingian comedy. But if Shakespeare or if Congreve appeared to-day, he would inevitably be rejected by all the reading committees of all the societies in London and by all the professional readers of Mr. Peaseblossom.

What is the future of the English public? It is a glorious future. Facts will be recognised. The public is not led by critics and middlemen. It is led by artists. Critics, at their most useful, interpret the public instinct; they do not lead it. At their most mischievous they are the worst enemies of the original author or producer who wants to lead a willing public into new ways. They find reasons for opposing him. They lend weight to the inertia of the multitude. They put off the time of recognition and fulfilment; but in the end the public chooses and the critics acquiesce. When these facts are clearly realised (as they must necessarily be realised when a great national drama is making a direct appeal to an alert and invigorated national public) the middlemen will go. The learned societies will dissolve. Dramatic critics,

as we know them to-day, will be unnecessary. The public will then clearly and thankfully accept their true position. Its noble and happy function is to follow its leaders into battle with prejudice and ignorance; to suffer no interloping between itself and them; to test everything and to hold fast that which they truly admire.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUTURE OF PRODUCTION

Leave thy damnable faces, and begin.

PRODUCTION includes everything that happens to a play from the moment it leaves the author's hands to the moment the curtain rises upon the first act. The designing and painting of scenery, the appearance and conduct of the players, the lighting of the stage, the disposition of its furniture, the decision as to where this line or that shall be delivered—in short, the whole process whereby the written play is translated into a continuous and visible pageant—all this is included in the term production.

Perhaps the most characteristic dramatic development of the last ten years is the gradual insinuation into a position of authority and importance of the producer. For producers are not a necessity in the production of plays. They are a fashionable luxury of the time. They are also a most important symbol of the present state of the drama.

Let us be quite clear as to the producer's function. He is not the humble stage-manager who orders costumes and shepherds the cast under superior

direction; he is not the principal player grouping the company about him with an exquisite regard for his own place in the limelight; he is not the author jealous for a correct interpretation of his play. He is an artist to whom the author's play and the manager's company are handed over as raw material. The public, to-day, is invited, at the *Savoy*, to see Mr. Granville Barker's *Twelfth Night*. At *Covent Garden* the public is invited to see Professor Reinhardt's *Œdipus Rex*. Shakespeare and Sophocles, Mr. Henry Ainley and Mr. Martin Harvey, had important shares in these productions. But the important people whose names bulked in big letters upon posters and programmes were names of the producers.

The producer is by origin respectable. He is a symbol of our recovery from a period of English drama when plays were disregarded. Plays were a star-part, and, for the rest of the company, *sauve qui peut*. The producer has changed all that. Even our few remaining stars have realised that a play put on the stage without the supervision of some disinterested authority is very like a band without a conductor. Actor-managers no longer care only for their own appearance and dignity. They are even losing the old offensive habit of regarding themselves as merely 'supported' by the inferior members of their company. Even actor-managers who are their own producers have learned to respect the unity and balance of a play; to view its progress from outside; and not neces-

sarily to lose interest in the proceedings of their company as soon as they leave the stage.

But though the producer is a healthy sign of the times, and of an indubitably respectable origin, yet he will surely pass away. In a perfectly healthy state of the theatre the producer would not exist. He cannot be fitted into our theatre of the future. He is a very valuable antitoxin for a worse disease. But when the disease is cured we must be rid of the antitoxin.

At this point it is necessary to plunge a little deeper into our subject. So far we have taken it for granted that drama is the art of a dramatist conveyed to the public through the art of a player; that plays as presented in the past, present and future theatres of England were, are and will continue to be a product of the collaboration of authors and actors. This is a very tall assumption in the light of much which is being written about the art of the theatre to-day. It will not pass without serious justification.

The greatest English producer of plays to-day, though his productions have been few and caviare to the general public, is Mr. Gordon Craig. Mr. Craig is a genius and a prophet. Moreover, he is an artist seeking expression through the art of the theatre. His practical work in the theatres of Europe and his books on the art of the theatre are a clear and logical declaration of what necessarily ensues in an apotheosis of the art of production. Mr. Craig's artistic justification of pro-

ducers, his conception of production as a fine art, has led him by natural stages to such amazing results that many of his warmest admirers have parted from him in mystification. Yet, when we examine Mr. Craig's ultimate position, we find it is all contained in a few apparently innocent assumptions which are accepted by most of the producers who refuse to follow him out into the wilderness. The only difference between Mr. Craig, whose logical intention is to destroy all that we now understand by dramatic art, and Mr. Granville Barker, whose aim is merely to produce it, is that Mr. Craig goes to the extreme of his position, and that Mr. Barker does not. If Mr. Barker accepts Mr. Craig's premises, as he undoubtedly does, he is logically bound to retire with Mr. Craig into the wilderness. Happily, Mr. Barker will do no such thing. He is right in refusing the absurdities to which Mr. Craig's position has committed him. Where he is wrong, as we are now to see, is in accepting the false psychology and the false æsthetics on which this modern conception of producing as a fine art is founded.

Wagner was the original maker of mischief, turning men's heads in the direction of a union of the arts, inconceivable in practice and, even if it were practicable, bound to fail of its effect. Wagner's theory of music-drama was a perfect blend of the arts. Poetry, music and the plastic arts, employed in a theatre, were to combine in a perfect whole, each setting off the other, each

heightening the other's effect, the sum of æsthetic emotion being multiplied by the simultaneous appeal. Suppose this were possible in practice, suppose an artist with the music in his brain of Beethoven, the poetry of Shakespeare, the visions of Tintoretto and Pheidias. Suppose he had mastered, not only the technical secrets of expressing himself perfectly through each of his separate media, but the art also of running a single inspiration in leash of them all. Even then this masterpiece must fail of its effect. To begin with a very small but obvious difficulty, it very rarely happens that an equal appreciation of all the arts resides in one and the same spectator. It is, of course, an assumption of polite conversation that a cultured person can talk with equal tact and intelligence about pictures as about music or letters. But, these pretences apart, we all know that cultivated men of letters rarely have an even tolerable ear for music, and that people who are exquisitely responsive to the delicate loveliness of Beethoven's ultimate variations in Opus 111 cannot even begin to understand why Raphael was a great painter (if he was). But put this difficulty aside. Suppose, not only that Beethoven-Shakespeare-Tintoretto-Pheidias has produced in a single masterpiece a perfect blend of the arts, but also that we are all equally responsive to their appeal. What will happen to an audience of people who are at the same time amateurs of poetry, music, painting and sculpture?

The answer is inevitable—hopeless tedium and confusion. When we listen to a song of Shakespeare set to music by Purcell—supposing we are equally appreciative of music and poetry—we spend half the time resenting the damage done to Shakespeare's poetry by forcing it into rhythms and cadences foreign to the medium of a poet, and the other half of the time resenting the limitations set to the music of Purcell by forcing it to run in harness with Shakespeare's words. Each apart is exquisite and has a completely satisfying emotional appeal. The total combined effect can only please the poet who is not a musician, or the musician who is not a poet. The poet who is not a musician will not be troubled with the music —that is to say, with an appeal to an entirely distinct set of æsthetic values and associations. For him the song will be a rather odd conventional sort of recitation of a good poem. The musician who is not a poet, on the other hand, will listen to the music. The words for him will be merely words. They will not confuse his æsthetic enjoyment with a distinct set of delicate poetic values. Those, on the other hand, who are equally open to the appeal of poetry and music will only get a consistent æsthetic pleasure by wilfully stopping their ears to one or the other. There is no avoiding this difficulty; for it is psychological. Appealing to three æsthetic senses at once is not multiplying the ultimate appeal by three. It is psychologically impossible to receive more than

one appeal at a time. In a long work of the combined arts one might drift from one to the other, or by rapid gymnastic of the mind give them preference in rapid alternation. But a strictly simultaneous appeal, even supposing a perfect masterpiece of all the arts, and a perfect audience to receive it, is humanly impossible.

But why need we speculate in the air? This thing has never been done. Wagner, who aimed at a combination of the arts, wedded glorious music to indifferent verse and to stage-effects that are a flouting-stock. When we go to a music-drama by Wagner we go quite definitely for a continuously written masterpiece of great music. When we go to an opera by Mozart, we go quite as definitely for an exquisite series of musical numbers strung on a conventional thread. We do not go for a combination masterpiece of musical and dramatic art; if we did, we should not obtain it; and, if we obtained it, we should very speedily discover that we were wholly incapable of enjoying it.

We are now in a position to survey the starting-point of Mr. Craig's pilgrimage into the wilderness. He started quite simply as a producer of plays, and his whole logical system of creation and criticism naturally followed from his assumption that there is a fine art of production; that the producer is a man with æsthetic emotions and ideas which he is determined to realise upon the stage. Mr. Craig, for example, begins as a fine-

artist to produce *Macbeth*. He sees *Macbeth* as a visible work of art; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he sees a work of art by Gordon Craig in terms of *Macbeth*. Primarily a designer, expressing himself in line and colour, Mr. Craig begins to express *Macbeth* over again in stage pictures, and in the movement and grouping of stage figures. The æsthetic emotion conveyed by Shakespeare in dramatic form Mr. Craig conveys again in plastic form. The result is the combination of a work of art by Shakespeare with a work of art by Mr. Gordon Craig; for, always supposing production is a fine art, and that Mr. Craig is a fine-artist, Mr. Craig's *Macbeth*, purporting to reverberate the appeal of Shakespeare, will also have added an imaginative vision of his own.

So far Mr. Craig takes with him all those people who really believe in Wagner's idea of a union of the arts, each enhancing the appeal of its neighbour. But mark what follows! Mr. Craig, pursuing this union of the arts, has himself discovered that such a union is impossible unless the theatre of to-day and all that we have understood by dramatic art from Shakespeare to Synge is first destroyed.

What was the logical progress of Mr. Craig? He began to ask himself perplexing questions. How can a producer as a man of art build up æsthetic conceptions with material that is beyond his control? How can he express himself through the individuality—even though it be trained to his

purpose and surrendered to his will—of the living, mobile and unaccountable player? How can artistic unity be achieved in an enforced marriage between the artistic purpose of a dramatic author unpacking his imagination in words and a producer unpacking his imagination in colour and line? How can a work of art arise from the chance combination of costumes by A., verses by B., scenery by C., lighting by D., and stage management by E.? If production is a fine art, argued Mr. Craig, then it needs must follow (1) that players are an unsatisfactory material; (2) that the author is an interloper; (3) that the art of the theatre will be discovered in an æsthetic handling of colour, line, light and movement; (4) that the producer must be a master-craftsman in the handling of this material, not merely a chief-of-staff with a subordinate company of artificers. Thus, the player vanishes in favour of the über-marionette or super-doll, because the player is not a perfect instrument in the construction of Mr. Craig's undiscovered symphonies of movement. The author vanishes, because he is an unnecessary impertinence in the producer's effort to achieve æsthetic results as a fine-artist. The scene-painter, costumier, stage-carpenter and electrician vanish, because it would be absurd for Shakespeare, say, to plan *Macbeth* in the rough and give out the various scenes for execution to subordinate authors, or for Raphael to design a cartoon and leave it to be put together by journeyman decorators.

Mr. Craig's logical excursion is really a *reductio ad absurdum* of Wagner's combination of the arts. Mr. Craig might have reached his present position by a shorter way. What was the result of his production, say, of *Macbeth*? In so far as he was an original artist, he had set up beside the *Macbeth* of Shakespeare a *Macbeth* of Mr. Gordon Craig. The one stood perfect in dramatic form; the other in colour and space. According to Wagner's theory, the one enforced the appeal of the other. According to our own view, either Shakespeare was unnecessary, or Mr. Craig. The appeal of Shakespeare's lines is not enforced, but diverted and confused, by the appeal of Mr. Craig's re-statement in terms of plastic art. It is a repetition of the fallacy of a song by Shakespeare set to music by Purcell. Mr. Craig, going even deeper into the postulates of production as a fine art has ultimately eliminated Shakespeare from his theatrical scheme. We, who have neglected Wagner, can see quite clearly that he might have eliminated Shakespeare on *a priori* grounds of psychology even before he had reached the über-marionette or super-doll. Whichever way you take—the way of logical artistic progress followed by Mr. Craig, or the way of psychological analysis whereby we have ourselves in the preceding pages been led to reject a union of the arts—you come to the inevitable conclusion that production as a fine art is impossible side by side with a retention in our theatres of what we have hitherto regarded as dramatic art.

Dramatic art is the realisation through the living player of the conceptions of a dramatic poet. The producer coming in with conceptions of his own, the producer as an artist with something of his own to visualise and express, is an interloper. He can only grow to his full stature by the destruction of the parties whose intermediary he is supposed to be. Either the fine art of production, the producer in his most modern shape, will disappear, or dramatic art will disappear.

Which is it to be? Let us begin quite simply with a fresh inquiry into the fundamental reason of the producer's apparition. Why is the producer necessary at all? We will eliminate now producers like Mr. Craig and Professor Reinhardt, whose real tendency is to subordinate and finally to destroy dramatic art altogether; and consider only producers like Mr. Barker and Mr. Boucicault, who in the present state of the drama still have a quite definite and useful function to perform. We have already seen that in so far as Mr. Barker and Mr. Boucicault are a protest against the inartistic subordination of plays and players to the star manager they are a healthy and encouraging sign. But this is only the better side of Mr. Barker and Mr. Boucicault. They are also a symptom of disease.

It is a disease whose ramifications will meet us at every turn—namely, the long divorce of English art and letters from the English theatre. The history of English drama during the last twenty

years is, as we shall see, the history of a movement whereby men of mind are again coming to regard the theatre as a natural medium. The rift is closing ; and one result of its closing will be the squeezing out of producers. Producers of the modern Napoleonic sort are necessary to bridge the gulf between the author and the player. When that gulf no longer exists they will have no further part to play in the development of contemporary dramatic art. The dramatic author, grown into a closer contact with the theatre, will be master of its conventions and technique. The player, grown into a closer contact with art and letters, will no longer require a heaven-sent expert to translate for him the author's meaning or to keep him out of his neighbour's limelight. Only in a continuous co-operation of author and actor can great dramatic art be achieved. The producer, if he be of the school of Mr. Craig, aims at the extinction of author and actor ; if he be of the school of Mr. Barker, he is a symptom of the temporary lack of understanding between author and actor. How this lack of understanding first arose, and how it is on the happy eve of removal, is not our present theme. But we must definitely realise that the producer's function—so far as he aims merely at filling a place in dramatic art and not destroying it altogether—is to play the interpreter between two parties, the author and the actor, who have for the moment forgotten how to speak in a common tongue.

The producer will disappear. In twenty years'

time people will wonder how the name of this mysterious functionary came into programmes and posters. They will speculate as to the nature of his office—wonder where precisely he fitted into the dramatic scheme. Plays, they will argue, are the natural fruit of an artistic collaboration of dramatic authors with players. The rest is machinery set in motion by a stage-manager. Who, they will vainly inquire, was the mysterious third person who was in the habit of ' producing ' plays ? Who was this person who knew more about the theatre than the men who were writing for the theatre, and more about the conduct of a scene than the players whose art it was ? They will be unable to picture the degradation of a dramatic day when producers were a necessary and wholesome corrective for the egotism, ignorance and artistic insensibility of players ; and a necessary safeguard for dramatic authors ignorant of stagecraft and out of touch with the English theatre.

Ça ira ! The middlemen are vanishing easily and happily. The dramatic critic has gone ; the public is in immediate touch with the finished play. The producer has gone ; the dramatic author is in immediate touch with his helpers and servers. These are conditions of vitality and progress.

Let us be glad, but not brutally triumphant in the disappearance of unhealthy symptoms. The dramatic critic and the producer were harmless necessary features of the old dispensation. We may without treason to our vision of the future

years drop a decent tear in contemplation of their empty places. The fate of the producer is especially affecting. Has he not in the insolent bold excess of his elevated day threatened author and player with that same destruction which now has overtaken himself ?

CHAPTER V

THE FUTURE OF THEATRICAL HABERDASHERS

Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; for the long and the short is, our play is preferred.

THE producer as a fine-artist, likewise as a middleman between author and player, has disappeared. But we have yet to foresee the direction of all those subsidiary arts and crafts of the theatre which during the last few years have tended to usurp a position quite out of proportion to their importance? What will be the position in our theatre of the future of theatrical haberdashers—of the wig-maker, scene-painter, costumier and electrician? How far are these craftsmen of importance in the worthy presentation of a masterpiece of dramatic art? Dramatic art is the conception of a dramatic author (delivered in speech and action of their characters) executed in the art of a player. These two varieties of artist combine to make a simple appeal to a public expecting to be approached neither as a public of musicians, painters, nor connoisseurs in *objets d'art et de vertu.* But a play has to be set within a framework of scenery,

and players have to be appropriately habited. What is the true place and function of decoration?

It is no more the business of scene-painters and costumiers to repeat in their scenes and costumes what they conceive to be the emotional appeal of the play they are helping to present, than it is the duty of printers to convey the emotions inspired in them by the text of a novel or a poem by printing it in divers coloured inks or varying the shape of the letters according to the æsthetic content of the passage transcribed. A printer æsthetically moved to print Henley's lines, *Margaritæ Sorori*, in the varied and rich hues of sunset, suggesting in the form of his letters a late lark, the old grey city, changing spires and Night with her train of stars, would justly be regarded as a nuisance. Nor should we be very greatly moved to bless and to admire a bookbinder who gave us *King Lear* in pages varying in shape, texture and hue according as his æsthetic ideas of their content prompted him. The scene-painter and costumier is not in quite the same position as the printer and bookbinder, but he is very much more nearly allied to these humble craftsmen than to the inspired pantechnicon fine-artist which Mr. Gordon Craig and Herr Stern would ask us to recognise. He has virtually the same duty to perform—never on any account to thrust himself between the dramatic author and his public, never to divert attention from the player to the scenes in which the player moves or to the clothes in which the

player is dressed. The craft of the scene-painter and the costumier resolves itself into the art of being inconspicuous.

This doctrine is the flattest heresy to-day, no matter to what sect we look—the pseudo-naturalist at *His Majesty's* theatre, the fine-art producers in Moscow and Berlin, or Mr. Granville Barker's conventional decoration of Shakespeare. Sir Herbert Tree overwhelms himself, his company and his author in irrelevant sumptuous detail, which, far from adding anything to the dramatic appeal of his production, distracts the imagination and gives one an impression that authors and actors are making perpetual desperate efforts to out-Herod their surroundings, to get their message manfully delivered out of a smoke and smother of contending crafts, to shout down scenes screaming to be heard, to outface costumes grimacing at the spectator, to outstare the electrician. The conditions of playing at *His Majesty's* are conditions which seem to have been carefully elaborated to kill the art of acting, to make it of no account. The art of Sir Herbert Tree's dramatic haberdashers is the converse of the art of being inconspicuous. What Sir Herbert has done in a thoroughly conscientious effort to vie with the text of Shakespeare, Mr. Craig has done because he is a fine-artist seeking expression in line and colour. His stage designs not only make an appeal independently of the play they are supposed to illustrate: they actually dwarf the players' art and

disastrously compete with the author's intention. Even when Mr. Craig is designing for living players and planning scenes wherein the spoken word is everything, he is already looking unconsciously forward to the logical result of his painter's view of the theatre—to a theatre of the future living somewhere beyond the kingdom of the super-doll. Professor Reinhardt is equally bent upon establishing theatrical haberdashery in a position where it becomes more important than the dramatic appeal. Sophocles and Shakespeare are mannequins for Professor Reinhardt and his milliners-in-chief. Even Mr. Barker has not yet, in his Shakespearean excursion, understood that the whole art of staging and dressing a play is the art of keeping the haberdasher's share of the enterprise as far in the background as is practically possible. The critics of Mr. Barker's *The Winter's Tale*, produced in the autumn of 1912, were in a manner right, though they grossly misunderstood Mr. Barker's intentions and grossly undervalued the magnificent importance of his progress in the restoration of Shakespeare to the modern stage. Mr. Rothenstein's costumes were very beautiful, admirable in design and colour, supremely and delicately beautiful as works of art. But they did not fulfil the first condition of dramatic haberdashery. They were not inconspicuous. They interfered disastrously with the play. Either you shut your eyes to them, which required a considerable effort of inattention; or you missed the dramatic appeal of Shakespeare precisely in

proportion as you yielded to the decorative appeal of Mr. Rothenstein.

The art of being inconspicuous is not simple. Much, for instance, depends on what the spectators are accustomed to see. Anything unexpected, anything that arrests the spectator's mind or creates in him a sense of novelty and surprise is, so far as it does this, bad for the play. An audience continuously startled by Professor Reinhardt's stage effects in *Œdipus Rex* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will, in the degree they are startled, miss the appeal of Sophocles and Shakespeare. One of the most striking Shakespeare revivals of 1912 was Mr. William Poel's *Troilus and Cressida*. Mr. Poel dressed his Greeks as ordinary Elizabethan gentlemen, put a clay pipe into the mouth of Achilles, and habited Thersites as the parti-coloured fool of Shakespearean comedy. Mr. Poel's spectacle was probably not very different from what Shakespeare intended. Certainly there were excellent reasons for all that Mr. Poel had ventured to do. But he had not solved the problem of being inconspicuous. Greek warriors in doublet and hose require a very complicated mental gymnastic on the part of a modern audience before it can begin to see and appreciate the play.

Are we not arriving at a very monstrous and impossible doctrine? If spectators are to see only what they expect to see, perhaps *His Majesty's* theatre is the best home for Shakespeare after all. London playgoers are used to the methods of

Sir Herbert Tree. They can begin to disregard them and attend only to the play. Is our National Theatre to follow the popular mode? Is the repertory theatre of the future to worry not at all about the subsidiary crafts, to take anything that happens to be in fashion?

It does not follow. Being inconspicuous as a principle of craft, as a positive ideal to be attained, is very different from being conspicuous in so fashionable a manner that people have outgrown their astonishment. The problem of staging Shakespeare (Shakespeare is conveniently taken as a synonym for English poetic drama) is to find a satisfactory elastic convention, and to hold it fast. All poetic drama, making its appeal through the spoken word and action of players, has at its highest and best rested on an assumption that the stage conventions, being fixed and easily adjusted to the needs of each individual play, will be of no relative importance as compared with the play itself. The machinery of the Greek stage was a perfect conventional medium. It counted for nothing in the spectators' mind. It was expected, invariable, simple and easily adapted to the author's individual needs. The machinery of the English Elizabethan stage was of precisely the same character. Shakespeare uttered his 'scenery' in his lines. He imposed his vision of the play upon the spectator by a dramatic means, not with the help of a plastic artist.

The problem for players, dramatic authors and

their craftsmen is to discover and determine the simple stage conventions of the future without regard to what happens at the moment to be the popular and accepted thing. Once the conventions are determined, to develop hereafter in organic response to the needs of dramatic art, the public will very soon accept them, and accepting them begin to disregard them. The chief use of a convention is that its presence is not felt. New conventions startle the stranger till their organic relation to the new message or vision of the artist is perceived. Then they are overlooked and forgotten. Old conventions offend the younger generation, partly because they are ill-fitted for its younger purpose, partly because they have come to be associated with the work of men who are merely repeating the art of the last great age. Conventions level with the art of the day are not even perceived by men of the day. Such conventions are an essential requirement of the dramatic art of the future. Conventions are the only things in art whose end it is to be inconspicuous. Their discovery and their determination will be one of the most important offices of the National Theatre in the years 1916–1920.

The history of English stagecraft has yet to be written ; and it will be a very fascinating study in history and in art. Briefly it is the story of a gradual conversion of the Elizabethan platform stage to the stage as we have it to-day, seen as a picture within a frame. In Shakespeare's day the

stage projected into the auditorium. It was virtually surrounded by spectators upon three sides. It is true that interior scenes were usually enacted upon an interior stage at the back of the platform under much the same conditions as prevail on the picture stage to-day. But for convenience sake we may regard the stage of Shakespeare—the stage that determined Shakespeare's technical method—as a projecting platform. There was a clear understanding that an audience was present in the theatre, in immediate touch with the poet and his players. There was no pretence that the players were of another world. There was a continuous rapport between the actors and their audience. The players were eye to eye with the people. They appealed to their auditors as orators appeal. It was an appeal of the kindled eye and the impassioned voice. Sometimes the appeal to an audience was personally direct. The player's "aside" took them into his confidence; his soliloquy (not the thinking soliloquy, which is always in order, but the soliloquy which helps forward the action) kept them posted in the progress of events.

The conventions of Shakespeare's stage were determined by the simple physical fact that a projecting platform cannot be cut off with a curtain and that a theatre open to the air cannot be artificially darkened. The dramatist must create his own illusion—

> "But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
> Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill."

This is Shakespeare's substitute for the modern stage-manager's call for two reds, back stage on the O.P. side. The method has its advantages, nor should we too hastily speak of its limitations.

In direct contrast with all this is the stage to-day, remote from the spectator. The player is thrust within a frame that cuts him off from direct personal contact with the audience; removes him to a far mimic world which pursues the event as though the audience was not in presence. To Shakespeare's age of poetic tragedy succeeded the post-Etherege age of naturalist comedy. The tragic platform on whose boards the Elizabethan iambus had built scene upon scene of magnificence and glamour retreated gradually within the proscenium arch. In Shakespeare's theatre the audience shares the progress of the scene; in Ibsen's theatre the audience is an eavesdropper. Modern producers have even suggested a fourth wall, completing the full circle of evolution by shutting the audience out altogether. Players sit solemnly before a fireplace supposed to lie between them and the spectators they have been taught to ignore. With this retreat of the stage from the spectator all the dramatic conventions which rested upon a recognition that the audience was in presence have disappeared. To address the audience is to-day a solecism. There is obviously something wrong in speaking to an audience which is not supposed to be there.

The retreat of the stage within the proscenium arch is organically connected with the movement

towards naturalism. We have very narrowly to determine what naturalism is, and what will be its place in the future of the English theatre. At present we will assume that naturalism is a legitimate artistic method admirably suited to certain ends; and that conventional naturalist machinery will be included in the apparatus of our theatres to be. The object now is to determine the form of our future stage, to which end it is essential to note that in English dramatic history, as a matter not of argument but of fact, the poetic drama of Shakespeare, depending for its illusion upon the immediate presence of players declaiming in the open house in living and emotional contact with the spectator, synchronised with the use of the platform stage; and that the naturalist drama of Etherege and his successors, depending for its illusion upon scenes framed and aloof, the spectators removed to another world, acting as God's spies upon the players, synchronised with the retreat of the platform stage through the proscenium arch. There is a perfect parallelism of the movement in English dramatic art to the movement in construction of the English playhouse.

The retreat of the stage within the proscenium arch was not yet complete in the nineteenth century. There remained the proscenium arch with proscenium doors right and left, and an apron stage reaching out into the auditorium, long after the age of Mrs. Siddons and Macready. The period most likely to reward the historian in search of an organic

correlation between the English playhouse and the English play is just this period of transition—the period when Shakespeare's romantic method of the platform still struggled for a footing upon the projecting apron of the eighteenth century. So long as the players entered by proscenium doors they had not entirely lost touch with the audience. Coming forward they could employ the platform conventions of Shakespeare. Retiring through the proscenium arch they could employ the eavesdropping or fourth-wall conventions of Ibsen. Restoration comedy belongs to this period of transition. It looks back to the platform and it looks forward to the fourth wall. Congreve's defence of soliloquy is quite modern. He uses only the thinking soliloquy ; and he does not include in his justification the soliloquy used for forwarding the action. So far he is modern. His stage is definitely retiring within the frame. But Congreve, like all his contemporaries, and like his successors for two hundred years, uses the " aside." It is still possible for players from the projecting apron to take the audience into their confidence. The spectator is not yet shut off. Nothing could more sharply point the parallelism between the evolution of the playhouse and the evolution of the play than the simultaneous disappearance in the late nineteenth century of the proscenium doors on the one hand and of the " aside " on the other.

The platform stage and the picture stage are not mere accidents of structure determined by

architects and electricians. The purpose of this brief survey is to show that each corresponds to a distinct dramatic method and a distinct dramatic appeal. The theatre of the future will confine itself neither to one nor to the other. The significance of the evolution of the picture stage, and of the partial return of modern poetic dramatists and producers to the neglected apron, has not yet been clearly realised by the critics. The apron stage lit from the auditorium is not a mechanical device to create a mild sensation of novelty in the playgoer; nor is it the pedantry of Shakespearean antiquaries. The platform stage reappears in response to the needs of poetic drama. No sooner had the stage retreated bag and baggage into the proscenium arch; no sooner had the last touch of naturalism been added to the process by the imaginary addition of a fourth wall, whereby players came down to the footlights and treated the audience as if it were a fireplace, than the revolt of poetic drama against this last consecration of naturalist stage machinery began. It is significant that Mr. Granville Barker, who has done more than any modern producer to popularise the fourth wall, has also done most to popularise the apron. The one method is as right and as necessary as the other. One thing at least clearly ensues from this inquiry—a complete exposure of the assumption that the modern picture stage is of itself better or worse than its predecessor. The majority of modern managers assume that the stage within a frame is

intrinsically a finer thing than Shakespeare's platform—that Shakespeare, if he had only seen his plays produced at His Majesty's theatre, would at once have perceived the advantages of Sir Herbert Tree's methods over those of Burbage. So deeply rooted is this assumption of the modern manager that he tears to pieces plays which were fitted to an entirely different convention to make them square with his own. An historical survey of the parallel movement of the English playhouse and the English play achieves the discomfiture of our modern Procrustes. He is compelled to realise that plays best make the effect intended by their author when they are played according to their author. Shakespeare's plays are not plays badly constructed to fit the picture stage of 1913. They are plays very well constructed to fit the platform stage of 1613.

The National Theatre will be constructed to admit every step in the national evolution of the English stage from Shakespeare to St. John Hankin. The principle of stagecraft in the presentation of Shakespeare and the poetic drama will be the conventionalising and simplifying to the last possible degree of all that merely subsidises the dramatic appeal. The part of the electrician is not to add an æsthetic appeal of his own to the æsthetic appeal of the author and actor. His part is to light the scene in a way that will neither distract the spectator with claims for an independent consideration, nor offend him with its crudity.

The electrician may exercise his craft to the top of his bent; but he must not mistake his position. It is one of the unhealthy signs of the state of poetic drama to-day that the electrician is asked to do for the poet what the poet is unable to do for himself. The costumier and the scene-painter and designer are in equal case. The plastic artist has no legitimate place or function in the theatre. Only in an age of meagre dramatic inspiration is he permitted to usurp the function of the dramatist. The National Theatre, with a staff of competent workmen, certified plumbers and decorators preferred, with a complete outfit of the latest appliances for lighting and changing the scene, will be a perfect instrument for the delivery of the finest masterpieces of dramatic art.

The burden of this chapter is supported by the difference of level to-day between naturalist production and poetic production. With one or two exceptions that prove the rule there is in the theatre to-day no poetic drama of consequence. The poetic dramatist uncertain of himself, unequal to an adequate assertion of his importance or to an adequate delivery of his appeal, relies, in his lack of inspiration, upon craft of production to make his position good. Contrast with him the naturalist. The best plays to-day are naturalist plays. The authors who are using the naturalist dramatic method rely upon themselves alone. They determine the character and style of their scene, leaving it to the mere honest work of theatrical

craftsmen to carry out their intention. There is no attempt at irrelevant fine-art in the production of a play like *Justice* or *The Madras House*. It is not assumed by the author, or felt by the spectator, that the costumier or the electrician adds a jot to the dramatic appeal of Mr. Galsworthy or Mr. Barker. Why does the electrician or the costumier become so much more important in poetic than in naturalist drama? The electrician and costumier become more important as the author and actor become less competent of themselves to assert their intention. Naturalist authors and naturalist players are masters of their method. The poetic dramatist and player are not. Poetic drama has fallen upon evil times. The dramatist being unequal to his burden, the artificers in light and hair and turpentine are invoked to help him sustain it. In the mid-twentieth-century outburst of poetic splendour, which will follow the foundation of our National Theatre, it will soon be realised how the former degradation of poetic drama was directly measured by the importance yielded thereby to the subordinate crafts. The quaint superstition of to-day that the limelight man is an important person in the raising of Cæsar's ghost will disappear when poetic drama of the future is lifted to the level of naturalist drama of to-day.

Even to-day when there comes an actor of genius who can present Shakespeare in the solid flesh it is possible for the least reflective playgoer to realise how little it matters that the limelight is not of the

latest and best quality, or that paint upon the scene is spread too thick. We have lately had opportunities, within a single year, of measuring Shakespeare as produced by Mr. Granville Barker against Shakespeare as acted by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Compare for a moment Mr. Barker's *Twelfth Night* with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet*. Mr. Barker's *Twelfth Night* had every advantage that a producer can bestow. Beautiful costumes against a beautiful decorative background, excellent music, an intelligent revival of the necessary apron, a very fair quality of acting, rising in a few instances to an extremely high level of accomplishment—all that the producer as fine-artist has been able to discover was tested and adapted for the occasion.

"Look here upon this picture, and on this."

Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson in his *Hamlet* of 1913 seemed bent upon showing once for all that production matters not at all when great acting is toward. The Drury Lane *Hamlet* of 1913 showed, not only that the actor and his author require no artistic aid of theatrical haberdashers to make their effect, but also that the actor and his author, if they have as much genius between them as will cover a penny piece, can unite and play clean out of existence the ugliest daubs of the false cardboard naturalism of the late 'nineties.' In Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* was no borrowed grace of the producing fine-artist. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson had

not even the advantage of the poetic conventions to which his play was originally fitted. He made his dramatic appeal in spite of his conditions, rather than with their assistance. Yet every one open to the appeal of Shakespeare had to declare that the total æsthetic effect of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* infinitely outweighed the total æsthetic effect of Mr. Barker's *Twelfth Night.*

Let us therefore light-heartedly contemplate the shutting of our theatres-to-be upon that cloud-cuckooland of light and colour seeking at this moment to lead them astray. Honest craft the theatres of the future will require. The worthy presentation of a play will, always as now, tax the resources of the stage-manager with his " helpers and servers." But with the disappearance of the producer as fine-artist, and a clear recognition that plays and play-acting are the first and last serious word of drama, the subordinate arts and crafts of the theatre will find their appropriate level. It is for the player to determine the conditions of his playing, the author to determine the artistic message of his play. The rest is decent framing of the picture.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUTURE OF REPERTORY

Come, sit down every mother's son and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin : when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake ; and so every one according to his cue.

. . . . . .

In all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

THERE are, as we have seen, two sorts of managers, two ways of choosing a play, two methods of financially managing a theatre. The present method is to give the public what you imagine it requires. As it is impossible to tell in advance what the public is likely to say to any particular play, the method of giving the public what it requires resolves itself into producing at artistic hazard four or five plays on the chance that one of them will hit the public fancy. It also resolves itself into running the winning play (when and if you are able to find it) to the bitter death. Producing what the public is supposed to require resolves itself, in fact, into the long-run system. It is a system whereby losses are cut and gains are counted ; whereby the unpopular play is dropped like a very hot chestnut ; and a popular

play is exploited to the last penny in a continuous career.

But the speculative manager, like the dramatic critic and the producing fine-artist, is in 1950 to be extinct. It follows that the long-run system—the system of regulating your career in accordance with reports of the acting-manager—will be abandoned. The manager of 1950 will follow his own ideas. He will be a man of mind and a man of art, looking for good plays, and determined that they shall be well acted. He will be content to pay his way, and to be worthy of his hire. He will sturdily resist the temptation to angle for immediate public favour at the ultimate risk of degrading the public taste and of losing his own.

The repertory system is the only possible means to this end. Repertory is the only system whereby the theatre can be continuously kept in a healthy condition of experiment, discovery and honest work. It is the only salvation for the art of the player, for the conscience of the manager, for the encouragement of the dramatic author. Let us briefly consider what repertory is; why it is essential for the improvement of the English theatre; why, too, it must surely prevail.

A repertory theatre has been strictly defined in the provisional statutes of the Executive Committee of the Shakespeare National Memorial Theatre. The National Theatre, to be opened in 1916, will, of course, be a repertory theatre; and the Executive Committee has realised the necessity of marking

the boundaries where repertory ends and long runs begin. Their definition is admirably elastic and admirably clear. We will accept it as the basis of our discussion.

"Following the precedent of all National Theatres," runs statute 12 of the provisional draft, "the theatre should be a repertory theatre, built and equipped for the purpose, and the company, both in respect of number and of qualification, should be suited to the presentation of a repertory: and, in order that there should be no doubt as to the meaning attached to the phrase, it seems desirable to state that a repertory theatre should be held to mean a theatre able to present at least two different plays of full length at evening performances in each completed week during the annual season, and at least three different plays at evening performances and matinées taken together . . . and the number of plays presented in a year should not be less than twenty-five. A play of full length means a play occupying at least two-thirds of the whole time of any performance. But two two-act plays, or three one-act plays, composing a single programme, should, for the purposes of this statute, be reckoned as equivalent to a play of full length."

This statute is both elastic and water-tight. A theatre run on these lines would be out of reach of temptation. Some such direction would be necessary during the period of transition; for repertory managers during the period 1916–1920

will often be sorely tempted into sliding back. Conceive our man of art, producing plays quite honestly after his own spirit. He happens upon a play that is bound to draw the public for two or three hundred nights. It is a good play. Why should he not turn aside from the strait and narrow way of repertory; pile up guineas for himself; give his players an easy time for twelve months; and please his audiences every day? The temptation is more than flesh and blood can stand. Mr. Granville Barker has been a repertory man. But how does he proceed? His runs are longer and more profitable than those of the most unblushing speculator. Mr. Dennis Eadie's enterprises in behalf of good plays and competent acting were grievously held up for two years at the *New Royalty*, while he exhausted the financial possibilities of *Milestones*. We cannot very bitterly censure either Mr. Barker or Mr. Eadie on this account. Indeed, their success is in one way a palpable hit at the speculating manager. It shows that managers who choose for themselves, aspiring to lead the public, are more likely to choose what the public is looking for, and to be followed by the public, than managers who put what they are pleased to call business before everything. Mr. Barker and Mr. Eadie merely play the old, very merry and human game of spoiling the Egyptians. Their exploitation of the long run when it comes their way is the worldly wisdom of a Socialist denouncing the social system of private capital,

but apparently quite ready, till the system is changed, to profit by it.

Nevertheless the men who yield to this temptation are digging the grave equally of their reputation and their profit. They are drawing heavily upon their current account at the bank of public opinion. When public opinion is alert, sensitive, educated and really able to declare itself, the folly of yielding will have become so obvious that the temptation will no longer exist. Meantime definition and a self-denying ordinance are necessary to buttress the resolutions of a private manager to be true to the spirit of repertory, which forbids him to sacrifice the future to the present, though he be as ravenous as Esau.

Repertory being defined as three plays a week and at least twenty-five new plays a year, what are its advantages for managers, players, and authors?

The manager's advantage is clear. He does not stake everything upon a single play, to gain or lose it all. He need not perpetually be making haggard inquiries at the box office. He can feel as noble as a missionary, as absolute as a King, as judicial as a Lord Chancellor, as independent as a Civil Servant. He is in a position to lap experience as a cat laps milk. He may kindle the smoking flax of dramatic genius into a national conflagration. He gets the last inch of interest, ardour and intelligence out of his players. Above and beyond all this, he can do what scarcely a manager in ten,

as things obtain at present, can do: he can keep his head.

There is a noted misconception about a repertory theatre. It is tacitly assumed that the only plays to be run by a repertory theatre will be unsuccessful plays. This misconception arises from the fact that a repertory theatre in London has never yet been tried. Mr. Frohman's enterprise in 1910 was a repertory theatre that intended to fail. It was run on the assumption that a repertory theatre only produces plays that the public are not likely to want. The fact we have yet to grasp about repertory theatres of the future is that their difficulty will be, not in the unpopularity, but in the popularity, of their plays. After a short period of experimental education of the public, many an excellent play, honestly chosen for its merit and competently acted, will be a popular success. The difficulty will be to give the public as many of these plays as it requires. Every repertory theatre in London will have in its list of plays two or three safe and certain successes. Running these plays collaterally with plays of experiment, plays of the future, plays of new men whom it is desired to afford a chance of seeing their work produced and acted, plays by their nature appealing to a limited section of the public, plays intended to push still further the important enterprise of winning back to the theatre the intelligent reading classes driven thence in despair by the speculating manager—in a word, running the popular plays with the

pioneer plays, the repertory theatres will undoubtedly pay their way and lead the English theatre into fresh fields.

The manager of such a theatre will be an alert and polished citizen of the commonwealth. He will not be a hunted and haunted specialist, mad with all sorts of fixed ideas as to what the public wants ; how a play should be written ; how a happy ending is necessary here, or a feminine interest there ; how the principal actor should speak at least two thousand words, enter somewhere about the middle of the first act, and never be more than thirty-five. He will be a man who lives level with the thought of his time, a man of ideas, impatient to find an original dramatic conception and faithful to execute it. He will neither despise his public nor slavishly respect it. He will realise that, though the multitude's opinion is more likely to be right than an Academy's, yet there will always be fine art with a limited appeal, as well as fine art with a universal appeal. He will also realise—a fact strangely lost sight of by people who write about art and the public—that though Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or to take a more homely illustration, Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, may in a given month of the present year be incapable of appealing to so many people as Alexander's Rag-Time-Band, yet, by the time we have exhausted the appeal of Beethoven or Mr. Shaw, they will easily in mere brute numbers have beaten Alexander to a frazzle. No one remembers or would understand the equivalent of Alexander's

Rag-Time-Band in 1837 ; but the Ninth Symphony, unlike *Charley's Aunt*, is still running.

Let us now consider the repertory system from the point of view of the player. The present system is clearly for the majority of players as wretched, as wasteful, as discouraging and as stupefying as a system well could be. There is a certain number of competent players in the labour market. There is a certain number of managers who desire to employ them. Fresh companies are formed for the production of each new play. The play may run for two nights or for two hundred, but at the end of the run, whatever its length, the contract is terminated. No actor knows where he will be playing six weeks hence, or with whom, or for how long, or for how much. It is a system workable from the manager's point of view only on the supposition that there will be always some competent player for his sudden purpose unemployed and ready to support him. It is a system of continual reshuffling ; a system that provides for the unhappy player a maximum of anxiety, uncertainty and discomfort ; and for the unhappy manager a frequent necessity to spoil his productions with a *pis aller* owing to the fact that the player he wants is contracted to some one else for a play that promises to run for ever.

But these economic difficulties of the market are of small account beside its evil artistic results. These are summed up in the fact that under this present system a player must of necessity label himself in big letters. When managers are hurriedly

looking for a player to take up this part or that in a contemplated production, it is obviously useful to know that A. is good at playing old men, that B. is good at playing a maiden aunt, that C. is good at playing a middle-aged epigrammatist with a monocle. So far has this system been developed between managers anxious to know where they can find some one to play a butler or an archdeacon and players anxious to be employed as continuously as possible in the continual reshuffle of companies, that slang terms have been invented to describe the required types. You hear a manager wondering where he can find a 'juvenile lead'; and, before you have recovered from the fit of shuddering horror into which he has thrown you, you hear his agent telling him that X. (whom every one know is the juvenile lead *par excellence*) is out of a job, and that he lives somewhere near the Marble Arch.

Not only are the less competent actors spoiled and artistically degraded. The system of long runs spoils the best actors, not only by the necessarily fortuitous system of its recruiting, but by the mere fact that it is a system of long runs. A young actor comes into notice. He is cast for some part at a West-End theatre. The play is successful, and runs for a year. What is the result upon this player's art? At a time when he should be continually experimenting, continually changing his rôles, doing all in his power to keep his technique flexible, to fight against the inevitable tendency of every artist to become stereotyped and fixed in his manner, he

is invited to appear night after night in the same piece, to fix for a whole year the tones of his voice and the conduct of his person, to run himself into the same mould. How disastrous this is appears in the fearful examples swarming in the English theatre to-day of players once of infinite promise, now little better than walking compendiums of tricks and mannerisms from which the life has long since departed—walking caricatures of their dead selves.

What a contrast is presented in the system of repertory ! Each repertory theatre will have a staff of players working at a fixed salary in permanent employment. The staff will be large enough to allow of the competent presentation of any play from Shakespeare to Synge, from Euripides to Mr. Galsworthy. Plays will continually be in rehearsal. Parts will continually be re-allotted. The members of the company will be friends and fellow-craftsmen. The theatre will be their school as well as their stage. Every symptom of that fatal tendency to inelasticity, to the stereotyping of the art of this man or that, will be watched and corrected. As soon as A. shows the least sign of being able to play Polonius in his sleep he will be put into Claudius or Laertes.

The greater the actor, the more he stands to gain by the change. The introduction of the repertory system means the total abolition of the present conception of a company of players as a group collected about an actor-manager in rôles decorously subordin-

ated to his in length and importance. No one suffers more from this than the actor-manager himself, in his art, in his health of body and mind, or in his powers of intelligently choosing and staging a play. Under the present system if an actor-manager plays Hamlet eight times a week for several months one of two things must happen—either Hamlet will kill him or he will kill Hamlet. Before we ignorantly censure this or that distinguished actor-manager for *clichés* none the less disastrous in that originally they were his own and meant something; for indulging fixed habits in the interpretation of utterly different rôles; for preferring to play continuously a specific type of character—before we censure him, let us reflect that overdriven men will habitually take the easier way; that the faults of much of our best playing are the natural fruit of our pernicious system of production; that they run through and through the foul body of the infected theatre; that no remedy is conceivable till in permanent repertory companies Hotspur is willing at short notice to change with Falstaff, Hamlet with the Gravedigger, John Tanner with Roebuck Ramsden.

An interjection is necessary here for the benefit of reverend playgoers who remember the days of the old stock company. The old stock company corresponds in time with the era of the lowest degradation of the English theatre. Believers in the long run, and in the continuous reshuffle of companies responding to the needs of our captains of theatrical industry, may justly argue that their way

is at any rate an improvement on the way of Crummles and of Nicholas Nickleby. But we cannot allow them to infer from this that their way is better than the repertory or stock company of the future. It is true that the old stock company had a repertory of plays, that runs were short, and the bills frequently changed. But the old stock company had no true resemblance to the new. The old stock company had got, in name, a repertory of plays; but it had not got a repertory of parts. All the plays were the same, and all the parts in the plays. The actor who played old men walked out of the *The Murder of Alice* into *The Blood of the Innocent*. It was the same play and the same part in the play. M. or N. always played the villain of the piece; and, immediately M. or N. appeared, the audience, as well as he, knew precisely where they were. There was nothing wrong in the old repertory system except that there was no repertory. The remedy for this state of things was the appearance of an English author who could write plays. The degradation of the English theatre of Crummles had nothing to do with the merits of repertory as against the merits of actor-management. The only great periods of English drama have been periods of the stock company. Burbage's company was a stock company: the Globe in Southwark was a repertory theatre. Betterton's was a stock company: the King's House and the Duke's House were repertory theatres.

Returning to the present advantages of repertory,

what will it mean for the dramatic author? Clearly he stands to gain most of all. We have yet to consider the causes and the width of the breach between English life, letters and art on the one hand, and English drama on the other. But one of those causes is undoubtedly exposed in the system of speculative actor-management and long runs. The effect of this system on the manager is to make him timid, conventional, stiff, orthodox. Having run to death his last success, his impulse is not the impulse of the true artist and entrepreneur—the impulse to look for something fresh, to break new ground, to carry his public on a career of joint exploration with himself. His impulse is to look for something as like his old success as possible, to ask the authors whose plays he knows for another play. He does not stage plays as an experiment, as a sure education for young authors and a possible education of the public.

But this is not the worst of actor-management. It not only restricts the number of plays produced, and tends mischievously and unintelligently to limit their choice, but by indirect influence of the player upon the playwright it actually confines his imagination. It consecrates in the mind of the young dramatist stage-types and stage-personalities of the day. The majority of our conspicuous actors are associated with characters and scenes repeated in a score of different plays. These characters and scenes, in the case of a dramatist who deliberately writes his play for a particular player, degrade his

work to the level of an academic exercise, and, in the case of any dramatist in touch with the theatre (as all dramatists necessarily should be), unconsciously pervert the tenor of his ideas. The stereotyping of the player leads inevitably to the stereotyping of the play. The repertory system, modifying the one, will necessarily modify the other.

How are all these wonderful changes to come about? How will speculating managers learn to resist the financial possibilities of a long run? How is every London theatre going to be induced to change its mode of life? How will our successful players learn to prefer hard work, continual practice, gracious self-obliteration, generous admission of new men, the perpetual give-and-take which a repertory system requires?

The first stimulus will be in the first few years' progress of the National Theatre. The National Theatre will attract an ever-widening public. It will pay its way, and be a perpetual solid proof that conscientious work does not necessarily mean bankruptcy. It will get the best plays, setting a standard which the actor-manager houses will in vain attempt to achieve. The National Repertory Company will act the speculative theatres clean off their respective stages in public derision. Other repertory theatres will open in imitation of the National Theatre, run by men long-headed enough to look ten years ahead; and in sheer self-defence the actor-managers will be compelled to consider their position. Players will begin everywhere to revolt

against the humiliating conditions of employment hitherto in vogue. They will perceive the advantages of the new system. The repertory managers will get better talent and a more conscientious service; and they will know how to push their advantage. Every year that the intelligent public looks more and more to the theatre as a fine art, as an institution reflecting the life and thought of the time; every year that the playgoer tends to put the theatre in a place of honour and authority beside the philosophers, poets and novelists of his day, the position of the speculative long-run entertainer will become more difficult. Even were he a wicked and stubborn materialist, lacking in the ideals even of a conscientious sign-painter, he would be forced into reformation for economy's sake alone. All we have so far realised as pointing to an ultimate victory, in shillings and pounds, of the man of art over the man of business equally applies to the victory of the repertory over the long-run system of producing plays.

But the movement will run more easily than the strict logic of shillings and pounds. Players and managers to-day are not merely grubbing after pence. Like all men worthy of their hire, the first object of a competent manager is to do a job thoroughly and to do it well. The artistic advantages of the new system will urge him towards repertory quite as strongly as its economics. No manager worth his salt will wait to see that repertory pays a dividend. No player worthy his buskins

will wait to see that repertory means finer opportunities and more regular employment. As soon as the obvious artistic advantages of repertory are perceived, a general movement will begin in its favour. This may ring possibly a little optimistically in the ears of people accustomed to think of actors and actresses as jealous, vain and feather-headed; squabbling about the size of their names upon a poster; fighting as to who shall wear the most striking costume in a play; yielding every inch of their limelight with an evil grace. It is true that many players are fretful and ungenerous, envious of success, insolent in triumph, bitter in failure. But these symptoms are not peculiar to players. They are the invariable symptoms of any profession where rewards are capriciously bestowed, and opportunities capriciously refused. The average player with a fair chance would be much like the average member of any other profession. Men do not work only for hire, or seek to excel only for vainglory. The acting profession, ill-regulated as it is to-day, teems with men and women with all the good craftsman's contempt of slovenly work and low intention. These men and women will not necessarily remain with a bad master who pays them five pounds if they can get a good master who pays them four. The tragic condition of the stage to-day is just this—that the best people, players and managers alike, are in the grip of a system which in their hearts they know to be a makeshift. Show them a better system, and

they will not wait to know that it returns them a slightly higher dividend than the old. Managers will not wait to perceive it will actually pay them to produce the Bernard Shaws of 1920 in 1916, as Mr. Barker produced the Bernard Shaw of 1913 in 1904.

Here we come upon the most important result of having a National Theatre as an object and an example. In order to show how money can be made by honest work it is an excellent idea to have an endowed institution to do honest work independently of money. In five years the National Theatre will be spending its profits in experimentally perfecting its work and lowering its prices; and not till then will it really be justified of its founders. It is the duty of a National State Theatre to prove to the individual manager how the best that can be done by people of independent means is also the best for the means of people who must make their enterprises pay. In this connection it is interesting to note that when the National Theatre was in 1913 first debated in the House of Commons, the Under-Secretary for the Home Office, picturing it as playing to empty houses, wanted to know of what use it was likely to be to the nation. Where, he asked, is the demand for a National Theatre? Mr. Ellis Griffith was saying in effect—Show me the fruit and I will help you to plant the tree. The demand for a National Theatre founded in 1916 will be clear enough in 1920. In 1920 it will have grown into a demand that all theatres shall be National Theatres. The National Theatre

of 1916 will in 1920 have proved to the satisfaction of playgoers, players, managers and dramatic authors that only in a theatre conducted on the principles of a national repertory theatre can English drama come to an honourable place in the life of the English nation, or be worthy of them that serve it and them that rule.

CHAPTER VII

THE FUTURE OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN

> But man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
> Would all themselves laugh mortal.

THE title of this chapter is misleading. I am not going to talk specifically of the Censor, or to discuss the licensing of theatres. Every one is heartily sick of the subject; and I have already written *in extenso* upon the Censor's iniquities, the necessity for his removal, the principles and work of his office, together with the grievances and interests of everybody concerned in the licensing of theatres.[1] For the purposes of this chapter the Lord Chamberlain's censorship of stage plays is merely a symbol of the divorce between English letters, English life and English art, on the one hand, and the English theatre on the other. Lord Chesterfield prophesied at the passing of Walpole's in-

[1] *The Censor and the Theatres.* London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1912.

famous statute of 1737 that its consequence would be the fixing of a great gulf between English literature and the English playhouse. His prediction was true from the moment in which Fielding deserted the English play for the English press.

In 1737 the English play was for the first time in our history put into a position of inferiority to every other form of artistic expression. Till 1737 pulpit, press, political platform and play had been neither more nor less free one than the other. Each was progressing towards freedom under the law. Walpole for political reasons in 1737 outlawed the English theatre, and determined that for nearly two centuries it should be at a disadvantage. Pulpit, press and platform went the appointed way of development. It was agreed that speech and thought should be free, subject to the right of the State to prosecute for definite offences. The theatre, on the other hand, was subjected to the capricious and undefined control of an official who had neither tradition, principles, nor law to guide or to limit the conduct of his office. The institution of the Lord Chamberlain's censorship of plays is a fitting symbol of the degeneration and dark age of the English theatre ; of its insensibility to the form and pressure of the time ; of its divorce from the spiritual and imaginative life of a hundred and fifty years.

The revolt against the censorship of the stage synchronises with the renaissance of English drama. It is no mere accident of chronology that agitation against the absolute rule of the Lord Chamberlain's

clerk dates from the appearance of Mr. William Archer before the Committee of 1892 as a solitary witness on behalf of a free theatre, or that these witnesses had in 1909 swelled to a host. Before Mr. William Archer appeared in 1892, every one was agreed that the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain worked well, nor was any one able to imagine a vain thing which might conceivably be better. Committees of expert gentlemen in 1853 and 1866 reported in favour and admiration of the censorship. Why, indeed, should there be difficulty? *Solitudinem faciunt et pacem appellant.* No idea, no method or convention of art, entered the theatre in those days which had not already, as Disraeli said of Peel's quotations, received the meed of public approbation. When an idea had been sufficiently long in the public mind to be sanctified by familiarity into being entirely respectable, it was put into a play. No one with anything shocking to say (and all original things run the risk of shocking somebody) would at that time have dreamed of conveying it to the public through the theatre. It was in consequence unlikely that the Lord Chamberlain would find the administration of his office very difficult. He had frightened genius out of the theatre. He reigned competently in an empty land; and, pointing to the abomination of desolation he had made, inferred that no rebellion proved the justice and beneficence of his empire.

The renaissance of English drama has changed all that. The Joint Select Committee of 1909 did not

report that the censorship of stage plays was working easily and well. Some of its conclusions would have caused each particular hair of the members of all former committees to stand upon end. It proclaimed that "A censorship with a power of veto before production is open to grave objections. Secret in its operations, subject to no effective control by public opinion, its effect can hardly fail to be to coerce into conformity with the conventional standards of the day dramatists who are seeking to amend them. These standards are not absolute. It is an axiom underlying all our legislation that only through the toleration of that which one age thinks to be error can the next age progress further in the pursuit of truth. . . . In view of the danger that official control over plays before their production may hinder the growth of a great and serious national drama . . . we conclude that the licensing authority . . . should not have power to impose a veto on the production of plays."

We are not here concerned with the merits of the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain, only with its significance as a symbol of the divorce between the English theatre and English art. The above conclusions are from this point of view only important so far as they formally proclaim that gradual reunion of the English theatre with English life, which is the most conspicuous and important movement of the last thirty years—a movement whose future we must very particularly determine. Why did the English theatre turn suddenly and

valiantly upon the oppressor; assert its dignity and competence; refuse to hang like a camp-follower in the rear of the arts? The revolt of the English theatre against the Lord Chamberlain is the token of its determination to contribute to the meaning and beauty of our English inheritance; to be put upon a level with poets, preachers and statesmen. As soon as the English theatre felt this impulse to recover its estate and dignity, forcibly confiscated by an Act of Parliament that remains to this day as a shameful evidence of Whig tyranny and Whig hypocrisy, it was bound to raise riot and rebellion in the desert confines of the Lord Chamberlain's province. The extent and the meaning of this revolt has now to be considered together with the prospects of its issue.

The renaissance of English drama cannot be fully understood without reference to the renaissance of the drama in Europe. While the English theatre was in the early nineties of last century sunk in a shameful surrender to the fiat that made of it a retailer of small wares—of second-hand goods imported from France, or stolen by theatrical hacks from the English stock of commonplaces already rejected as worn-out by contemporary thinkers and writers—in a word, while the English theatre was almost entirely cut off from English civilisation, the theatre in Europe at large was coming to be regarded as a noble instrument of expression, a form fitted for the delivery of high passions and big ideas. No sordid accident of political history had in Scandi-

navia, Russia, or Germany determined that the theatre should fall into a position of inferiority. Thinkers and poets of these races were not given to understand that if they chose the theatre for their kingdom their work would be inspected, and, at the discretion of a Government clerk, declared unfit for public consumption and destroyed. In Scandinavia, Ibsen, Björnson and Strindberg; in Russia, Tchekoff, Gogol, Gorki and Tolstoi; in Germany, Hauptmann and Wedekind were producing plays that reflected the intellectual life of their time. Of all these movements and of all these names one only had an immediate influence in England. The plays of Ibsen began almost immediately to be translated into English and to be played in English theatres. Ibsen's advantage over his contemporaries was mainly due to the ardour with which his art was expounded and advocated by a group of able and determined champions of naturalist drama. He became the watchword of a sect. He was an active leaven, and the whole lump was speedily and with an amazing virulence fermented. Mr. William Archer led heavy battalions in this attack. Mr. Bernard Shaw dashed impetuously to and fro. Mr. A. B. Walkley skirmished in light array. The influence of Ibsen was speedily felt in England as a model of dramatic style, and as a living witness to the shame of the English theatre. It came to be realised that in Norway was a theatre that counted in the intellectual life of the people—a theatre that handled the problems of life in plays for the stage

as fearlessly as in England Mr. Thomas Hardy handled the problems of life in his novels of Wessex. English critics looked into Russia, and there saw dramatic art swaying level with Russian music; into Germany, and saw dramatic art swaying level with German letters. Discontent intruded. Questions were asked. Why should the English theatre be thus outstripped? Why should the countrymen of Shakespeare and of Etherege be thus put down by the countrymen of Tchekoff and the countrymen of Strindberg?

These questions were promptly and rudely answered by the Lord Chamberlain. Mr. Bernard Shaw, having introduced Ibsen to English playgoers, now set about introducing himself. He wrote *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Mr. Granville Barker, a pioneer in the art of producing naturalist drama in England, now began to write it. He wrote *Waste*. These plays were written on the assumption that English dramatic art was in dignity upon a level with the dramatic art of Scandinavia, in which Mr. Shaw and Mr. Barker were deeply read. The sequel is a well-worn story. The plays were refused a licence. It had for nearly two hundred years been assumed that the theatre was an improper place for ideas not thoroughly familiar to the English people. It had for nearly two hundred years been assumed by the public and by men of mind that the theatre was unsuitable for any serious approach of any of the high things which supremely matter. Mr. Shaw and Mr.

Barker, looking at Scandinavia and Russia, had for the moment forgotten this. The Lord Chamberlain sharply arrested them. The theatre, he said, is in a position of inferiority ; if you have anything important or original to say, you must write a poem or a novel, or make a speech in Hyde Park, or deliver a course of lectures in a public hall, or write a series of articles in the *Times*. So long as you are not blasphemous or indecent, all these ways of expression are open to you. But you must not put anything sincere, original, or serious into a play. You must not put into a play anything that has not already been put into a novel or a newspaper. You may not in a play say anything, however innocent of offence, that has not been said before. If you put anything into a play beyond household words, I have in my office at St. James's Palace a clerk who will be shocked and startled ; and I shall be compelled to assume that every one else in England will be equally shocked and startled, and that a scandal will ensue. I shall therefore have to forbid the performance of this play, and destroy therein the property of the author.

From that position the Lord Chamberlain has not to this day retreated. A Joint Select Committee has drawn evidence that covers his high office with ridicule. The House of Commons has resolved (with one dissentient who misunderstood the motion before the House) that the censorship of stage plays should be abolished. But the Lord Chamberlain's clerks (owing to the increasing

anxiety and labour of the office, arising out of the recent revival of English drama, the clerical staff has had to be doubled) still refuse to pass plays that contain anything in violation of the pact of 1737. The agitation against him grows, and the motives of war multiply in proportion as the English theatre strives to come more closely into touch with the imaginative and spiritual needs of the people.

That the correspondence between the renaissance of the English theatre and its quarrel with the Lord Chamberlain should be put beyond a doubt, whenever a foreign play is translated for presentation in an English theatre—a foreign play of the type that inspired the English renaissance—the Lord Chamberlain refuses to allow its public performance. Who knows to what extremes of perilous emulation it might impel the more turbulent English spirits? The Lord Chamberlain has not forgiven Ibsen his share of the enterprise. He has never been able to forget how, in a fit of absent-mindedness, his clerk allowed *A Doll's House* to slip through and corrupt the English theatre into rebellion and contempt. He screws his revenge to the sticking-place. *Ghosts* is still waiting for a licence, though the ideas in *Ghosts* have for years been commonplaces of English literature and conversation.

It must not be imagined that the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain acts only to the disadvantage of a particular kind of heretical or propagandist

play. It is an accident merely of the renaissance of English drama that its most conspicuous examples are naturalist plays of a particular school. The quarrel of the English theatre with the Lord Chamberlain is not that he objects to the theatre being used as an heretical pulpit, that he objects to the undermining of institutions like monogamy or the established Church, but that he objects to any revival of English drama whatsoever. Every author who chooses the theatre for the delivery of his artistic message puts himself in peril of the Censor. The Theatres Act was intended to keep men of art and men of mind out of the theatre, and the Lord Chamberlain knows it is his duty to abide by this intention and to enforce it. He knows it is his duty to prevent the sincere treatment in a stage play of religion or of politics. Neither men's spiritual nor their social adventures are lawful dramatic ware. Religion is contraband. Politics is false coin. Imaginative sincerity has a price upon its head. Mr. Bernard Shaw writes a religious play: it is forfeit. Mr. Granville Barker writes the tragic spiritual history of a man who transgressed the social agreement and of a woman who sinned against the laws of life: it is forfeit. Mr. Phillpotts puts into a play of Dartmoor some part of that force and sincerity of effort which have given him his standing in English letters: it is forfeit. M. Maeterlinck repeats the theme of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and of the Hebrews' *Judith*: it is forfeit. These forfeitures

are not exacted owing to the subjects at issue. Adultery is a privileged theme. Blasphemy, defamation and indecency are allowed in precisely that degree in which they are required by theatrical financiers and by the public. The Lord Chamberlain looks only to the purpose of his office, which is to keep the theatre isolated so far as he can from the intellectual and imaginative life of the time. His heaviest blows have fallen upon the naturalist school that follows Ibsen, because this school has up to the present been closely identified with the revival of English dramatic art. But they are not confined to this school, nor are they levelled at naturalist drama *eo nomine*.

The Lord Chamberlain very fortunately delegates his functions as licenser to a clerk who from the nature of his office is seldom a statesman or a prophet. The Censor has incompetently allowed the rift between English art and the English theatre to close quite appreciably. He has frequently wasted his thunder upon plays that are relatively harmless, and let pass unchallenged plays that are dangerous to the last degree. Even in dealing with the naturalist school of authors, he has made error upon error of judgment. *Ghosts* is a comparatively harmless play, from a Censor's point of view, compared with *A Doll's House*. The obvious moral message of *Ghosts* is a commonplace of English family life compared with the obvious moral message of *A Doll's House*. *Ghosts* is Ibsen's impressive invitation to mankind to remember that

sins of the mothers and fathers are visited upon the children—an invitation which may conceivably be spiritually beneficial to susceptible members of an audience, but not necessarily destructive of their domestic peace. *A Doll's House* is Ibsen's invitation to ninety-nine Englishwomen out of a hundred to abandon the beds and boards of their husbands. A competent censor would never have licensed *A Doll's House.* The censor's mistake in dealing with individual examples of the naturalist school is as nothing compared with his mistake of supposing that the naturalist school was head and front of the peril in which he stood. The naturalist school was identified by its enemies with the English dramatic revival, and its authors and critics assisted the delusion. Nevertheless, it was neither the only nor, as ultimately we shall see, the most important part of the English renaissance. The Lord Chamberlain was so fully taken up with resisting the efforts of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Barker to bring English dramatic art into touch with English life that he neglected to observe that authors like Oscar Wilde and St. John Hankin were similarly engaged.

Let us briefly consider the course of the English renaissance of the last thirty or forty years that we may precisely measure the extent of the Lord Chamberlain's error, and predict its consequences.

It began, of course, with Robertson. The Lord Chamberlain's first mistake was licensing *Society* and *Caste.* Tom Robertson should have been for him a screed upon the wall, a portent and the pro-

logue of revolt. Here were plays of the English temperament; unborrowed, clean work of an honest author; aiming quite obviously at English language. For the Lord Chamberlain these plays should have smacked unmistakably of rebellion. Teacup and saucer was a premonition of tumbrils and the guillotine. He should have shut his eyes to seeming prettiness and innocence. The audience which assembled in the Bancrofts' theatre over a generation ago at the première of *Society* was assisting at a dereliction of duty by the Lord Chamberlain.

The impulse given to the infant English drama by Robertson, once suffered, could not in its consequences be recalled. Before it was exhausted, the Lord Chamberlain, misled by superficial absurdity, had suffered Sir William Gilbert. This error was the more remarkable as Gilbert's work was quite definitely a recovery for the English theatre of a province from which it had been definitely excluded in 1737. Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera was in practical effect a repetition in the English theatre of offences for which it was originally outlawed. It recalled the work of Gay, whose *Beggar's Opera* was the immediate occasion of the Theatres Act. *Patience* was a topical commentary upon English life, as valuable for the future of the English theatre, as symptomatic of the closing of the rift which the Lord Chamberlain was expected to maintain, as any product of the naturalist theatre of Ibsen.

Even more important for the future was the almost entire civilisation of the English theatre reflected in the comedies of Oscar Wilde. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was as definite an assertion as we have yet had that the English theatre was determined to recover its inheritance. It was a play that might definitely rank with the best work of contemporary novelists and poets. It has left its mark upon English comedy as indelibly as the work of Ibsen. The great majority of English comedies written since the first performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *A Doll's House* are a blend of the naturalist stagecraft of Ibsen with the literary manner of Wilde. No London drawing-room of English comedy was the same after Wilde.

St. John Hankin is another important dramatic author who by a happy accident entirely escaped the Lord Chamberlain. The influence of Hankin upon the English theatre is profoundly underrated. It is true that his plays are to this day but rarely performed in London; that he is merely a name to thousands who have been deeply influenced by work which ultimately derives from him. But his influence is not to be measured by the present extent of his reputation, as we shall realise hereafter in another connection. Hankin is the original author of the 'slight' play; the comedy of provincial manners; the comedy of what Elia would have called 'middle interests'; the comedy of life, not at its crises, but from day to day. Hankin

was to this extent a pioneer in the closing of the rift between the English theatre and English life. Hankin, moreover, with Wilde and with Mr. Bernard Shaw, definitely restored the connection of the English theatre with English letters. Plays are read to-day as literature. Plays are published. There are beautiful editions of Wilde and a beautiful edition of Hankin. The publication of English plays is an industry of the last ten or fifteen years; and to measure the extent of the dramatic revolution typified in the fact that plays can without absurdity be decently bound and fairly printed we have only to purchase from Messrs. Samuel French half a dozen acting editions of plays taken at hazard from the shelves of twenty years ago. The old acting edition was not intended to be read. It was only fit to be scored by the stage-manager, thumbed by the prompter, worn into a merciful condition of unrecognisability by the player. It was an affront to the eye in format; an offence to the soul of any one who cared for the dignity of English drama. No English author other than a dramatic author would have permitted his work to issue so meanly forth. The old acting edition conspicuously asserted that the contemporary English play was unworthy to be printed. Hankin and Wilde have changed all that. At the present moment hardly a publisher in London is not putting forth plays to be read. English plays are a part to-day of English letters.

This publication of plays is an excellent indication

of the extent to which the Lord Chamberlain's régime has broken down. In defiance of the old understanding, ideas are now put into English plays that have not been previously exhausted elsewhere; and they are presented in language fit to print. The root assumption of the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction is that anything fit to print was unfit for a play. If a thing was fit to print—if it were written well enough to stand the test of publication, and if it were of sufficient original value to make it worth a publisher's while to assume that the public might like it in a book—then it must necessarily tend to bring the English theatre upon an equality with English letters, and into touch with English life, which ends it was the Lord Chamberlain's manifest duty to defeat. That we have arrived so far in the stultification of the Lord Chamberlain's policy is due to the fact that, while the naturalists of English drama were holding the main forces of the official enemy preoccupied with a frontal attack, other movements were afoot, under the leadership of men like Wilde and Hankin, committing irreparable damage upon flank and rear. The extent of this damage is measured by the publisher's present willingness to consider that almost any successful play of the day is likely to be worth reading by a public who can afford to buy it decently printed and becomingly bound.

The Lord Chamberlain has not yet realised the extent and consequences of his error. To thoughtful observers they were already clear in the agitation of

dramatic authors which preceded the appointment of the Joint Select Committee of 1909. It was then perceived that the attack upon the Lord Chamberlain's authority included every dramatic author of dignity and repute. It was not confined to authors of the school upon which the Lord Chamberlain's thunder had been almost exclusively directed. Authors, like Sir Arthur Pinero, belonging to an age which dated back to the era when plays were written in a mysterious stage-shorthand, were seen in alliance with authors like Sir James Barrie, who inherited the tradition introduced by Wilde that plays should be written in English, to attack and discredit the censorship. Every author who felt he had a small share, original or imitative, in the renaissance of the English theatre was compelled to bear a part in the rebellion. The Lord Chamberlain, identifying the English dramatic renaissance with the naturalists, was in 1909 thunder-smitten to realise that the whole body of English authors—tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical, scene-individable, or poem-unlimited—was united with the naturalists for his discomfiture. Every dramatic author who shared the determination of the naturalists that English drama should resume an honourable place in the dramatic art of Europe, and beside the kinsmen fine arts of England, recognised in the Lord Chamberlain the incarnation of their degradation and the sanctified obstacle of their ambition.

Rebellion has now spread too far to be checked. The smoking flax is now a conflagration. The Lord Chamberlain is unable to quench it, and a formal decree of the House of Commons has already gone forth for the extinction of his authority. His one remaining bulwark against sense is the support of speculative managers and of managers who from native modesty pretend that they are no better than their inferior brethren. Sir George Alexander, for example, supports the Lord Chamberlain, affirming he is incompetent to keep the *St. James's* theatre decently in order without the help of a Government inspector. This is merely Sir George Alexander's generosity and good feeling. As a manager he feels bound to stand by those of his comrades of whom this confession would be strictly true. Sir Herbert Tree, on the other hand, tells us that, as a man of art, he objects to the censor; but that as a manager (again from a generous but mistaken impulse of generosity) he thinks the censor is useful and necessary. It would be impertinent here to discuss the remote financial considerations that determine the rank and file of speculative managers in supporting the censor's jurisdiction. These considerations are bound up with the system of long runs, of provincial tours, and of actor-management which, as we have seen, is shortly to be superseded. Support of the censorship of stage plays by managers coincides, in fact, as we should suspect, with a system admirably fitted to ensure the degradation of dramatic art and a post-dating of its revival. The passing of this

system and the passing of the censorship will naturally synchronise one with the other. The Lord Chamberlain will lose his last supporters in the coming reformation of the conditions of management.

The Lord Chamberlain's censorship of stage plays will be abolished in 1917 as a natural corollary of the endowment of the National Theatre. It will not be necessary for English dramatic authors to wait until the revolution is complete for the censor's removal. Several years before the speculative manager is entirely extinct the pressure of dramatic authors and of public opinion, educated and inspired by the dramatic revival, will be sufficient to sweep away the censorship of stage plays. The institution is already effete. It has completely lost touch with its primitive intention. It has become false to its ideals of the nineteenth century—the period of its supremacy and vigour. It yearly licenses plays that are yet further concessions to an enemy leagued for its destruction. Every licensed play of merit and distinction, of sincerity and value, is a stitch in the censor's shroud. In vain he tries to detach parties of the enemy from their allegiance, to make dissension in the opposing ranks. In vain he attempts to bribe, with offers of an immunity almost complete, authors who, he thinks, might possibly find it to their interest to support him for a consideration. "You may be indecent," says the Lord Chamberlain, "defamatory, vulgar, licentious, personally offensive and morally enervating; you may stupefy the people's imagination and degrade

their intelligence—all this you may do if only you will help me to keep the English theatre in the position it was intended to occupy by the theatres legislation of 1737 and 1843. I will free you from responsibility to your conscience, from accountability to the law. You may, at your pleasure, degrade the theatre and maintain your respectability. All I ask in return is that you should uphold me in the seat of authority." The dramatic authors are deaf to these appeals. Their final victory four years from now will be little more than the formal consecration of a freedom already achieved.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUTURE OF DRAMATIC NATURALISM

Be not too tame neither, but let your discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.

THE dramatic method to-day is the method of naturalism. Why this should be will shortly appear, also why this method will no longer obtain in 1950. First, let us be quite clear as to what we mean by naturalism. It is too often assumed that naturalism implies a more truthful interpretation of the facts of life, a closer approximation to reality, than romanticism, say, or classicism. But we have very definitely to realise that these various labels do not touch the quality or measure the veracity of art: that they do not tell us anything as to the truth and value of the artist's message, or the virtue of his creative power. They merely describe his delivery, the form which his artistic conception has assumed, his mode of utterance. They are a question of language merely, quite immaterial to the poet's rank. I shall, in the course

of this chapter, try to clear away one or two fundamental misunderstandings as to the meaning of terms so hopelessly corrupt and misused as 'realism,' 'naturalism,' 'idealism,' 'romanticism.' It is a good rule for critics, who should be painfully aware of the necessity of clear thinking, to distrust all words in 'ism.' There are, and always will be, writers who conceal, not only from their readers, but from themselves, that in building up impressive sentences with an inserted 'ism' at precisely the point where in plain English their puzzle-headedness would stand revealed, they merely darken counsel and bar the way to a salutary sense of the difficulty of their subject. The mere presence of a barbarously imported foreign termination upon the end of a word which is able to live quite comfortably without it is ground for suspicion. If you are able to say that a thing is 'natural,' you should very particularly pry into the merits of an opinion that requires you at a critical stage of the argument to say that it is 'naturalist' or 'naturalistic.' For where is the virtue of that affix?

The vaguest of critics is under an impression that he means something when he describes a play of Mr. Galsworthy as naturalist, and in this way seeks to distinguish it from a play of Shakespeare or Mr. Yeats. But the employment of a technical word like 'naturalist' blinds him to the true nature of the distinction. If he were compelled to describe Mr. Galsworthy's play simply as 'natural,' he would at once feel there was something wrong.

He would say, Are not the plays of Shakespeare natural?—and, if so, what on earth do I mean by distinguishing them by this particular epithet from the plays of Mr. Galsworthy? The same difficulty arises if we choose the alternative pair of words, real and realistic. In what sense is *The Silver Box* more 'real' than *Cymbeline*? If Mr. Galsworthy be 'real,' is Shakespeare therefore not real?

There is no strict antithesis between what is 'classical' or 'romantic' and what is 'natural' in art. The true antithesis is between good art and bad; and there is no other antithesis that matters. The distinction between the 'classical' and the 'natural' is merely a distinction of method, as immaterial in itself to the quality of the work as the distinction between writing it with a Pickwick and writing it with a Waverley pen. A slovenly use of terms like 'realism' and 'naturalism' has fostered an absurd idea that there is a class of artists who actually aim at observing and copying the facts of life; and that this class of artists must be sharply contrasted with another class which aims at fashioning an ideal. The mere statement of so absurd a view bristles with contradictions. To talk of an artist copying the facts of life is nonsense. Nevertheless, there is obviously a difference between Mr. Yeats' *Deirdre* and Mr. Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*. If you cannot account for it by describing *The Silver Box* as natural, thereby insinuating that *Deirdre* is not natural, you must account for it otherwise. There is, of course, a very

real distinction, which makes it the more deplorable that it has been overlaid with persistent misuse. All art must come by way of the artist's imaginative vision of things; and it is inherently a false distinction to describe one sort of art as imagined, and another sort as copied. The so-called realist does not imitate what he sees—always supposing he is an artist; but, just like Racine or Shakespeare, he absorbs into his heart and brain the facts of life. They are his raw material, just as they are the raw material of the classic or the romantic. It is when the process of imaginative assimilation is complete that the difference between the schools—simply a difference in presentation—begins to appear. The artist has now made the material his own; and he is great in the proportion that this imaginative assimilation is deep and full. This is the mysterious process of creation, almost unconscious, as all the great poets have witnessed; and, according as the process is complete, so will the created thing, whatever form it may assume, live of itself and compel mankind to receive it for vital truth.

What, then, is the difference of method which has led so many to misunderstand what is commonly known as 'realism'? It is merely a question as to the form in which the artist desires his conception to appear. Some dramatists, for instance, having collected, in observation of life and in heart-searching, the raw material of their drama, prefer, when they have made it their own, to throw it back into a cunning semblance of the form in which it was

first derived. Ibsen took this way in his naturalist plays. He observed his facts from life; lived with them, sometimes for years, in imagination; and, at the last, when the moment came to give them shape and tongue, he chose to present them as illusively of the texture of the medium from which they were originally derived. Ibsen, as an artist, must therefore be judged, not as ignorantly he often has been, on the fidelity of his sociological plays to the actual events and appearances of a Norwegian domestic interior, but by the three supreme tests of every artist, no matter what way he chooses to build his illusion. First, was his vision perfect of the world?—did he choose his material from life as a just man, whose view of things is balanced and true? Second, had he the imaginative power to make this material his own?—was he able to breathe upon the body of what he saw, to give it life, and return it to the world quick with the breath of his spirit? Third, was he sufficiently the master of craft, in giving a local habitation to his vision, to build the illusion of truth in the medium he chose?—could he, in fact, as the formal artist, successfully observe the conventions he accepted? It is at this third stage that the distinction comes in between the 'naturalist' and the 'romantic'—namely, in the choice of their method of illusion—whether it be Shakespeare's method with Bottom and Titania, or Mr. Shaw's method with Mr. Tanner and Miss Whitefield. The reason why Mr. Shaw is inferior to Shakespeare is not that he

chooses to give to his people the illusion of being contemporary ratepayers, whereas Shakespeare chooses to give to his people the illusion of being fairies, but (1) that Shakespeare's vision of life is more just than Mr. Shaw's, (2) that Shakespeare's imaginative power is greater than Mr. Shaw's, (3) that Shakespeare more successfully sustains the illusion that Titania is a fairy than Mr. Shaw sustains the illusion that Miss Whitefield is the woman one meets in the Tube. Shakespeare, in fact, is superior to Mr. Shaw at all points of the artist's progress.

These facts are quite frequently ignored even by those who clearly realise that the mode or label is comparatively a small thing. It is a tendency of each new generation of artists to assume that the conventions it accepts are better than those of its predecessor. The assumption is always absurd and is always seen to be absurd by critics of a later period. Conventions in themselves are neither good nor bad.

The chief fault of the English theatre to-day is precisely this too ready belief in the virtue of this or that particular convention. The naturalist followers of Ibsen really believe, though they do not confess it, that the naturalist gets by mere virtue of his method nearer to life and nature than the romantic or classic. He tends to assume that the mere application of the naturalist formula has a positive value; that it is a kind of talisman for the evocation of a masterpiece. Other schools,

forming in opposition to the naturalists, quite as definitely direct their criticism not upon the art of their rivals but upon their artistic method.

In the autumn of 1912 I delivered upon this text an hortation to the playgoers of Manchester. Manchester has played an important part in the history of English drama during the last few years. Manchester has had the best and most faithful of the repertory theatres of Great Britain—a theatre which for a time enjoyed the advantage of having for its director Mr. B. Iden Payne, one of the few producers to-day who is not slavishly identified with this or that particular 'school' of dramatic art. Manchester needs hortation far less urgently than London or the English theatre at large. Manchester, nevertheless, has confessed itself, *mea culpa*, in the organ-voice of her *Manchester Guardian*, which advised those of its people who were interested in the future of the English theatre to learn by heart this jeremiad of a strange prophet. Upon this hint of its pertinence I venture here to transcribe from my address one or two of the more reasonable paragraphs[1]:—

"The most unhappy feature of the theatre to-day is the rooted faith of its authors, players and critics in the mere virtue of mode. The theatre is riddled with sects and persuasions. The fashion is to look

[1] Printed *in extenso* in the very beautiful *Manchester Playgoer*, the first number of a new series, edited by Mr. Raymond Drey (Sept. 1912).

for a definite sort of drama. Each of us is waiting upon the future with a private and particular interest in a brand of play, or a method of production, whose character we rather confuse than explain with technical terms. Each small group is able most distinctly to pronounce the tribal shibboleth; and is serenely happy to assess the merits and relative importance of this or that member of the happy family in whose distinguished bosom the 'new' great drama will be cherished to ultimate perfection. The fortunate side of these cabalistic arrangements is that members of one system would invariably scorch out of existence every one who remains outside. Since at present there cannot be too fierce a critical ray turned into every hole and corner of the theatrical position, the spirit of hostility of those who cry 'mum' to the less fortunately inspired who cry 'budget,' is in itself highly desirable, and not lightly to be discouraged. But, unfortunately, the criticism is not always intelligent. Group A. quarrels with group B., not, as in the majority of cases it well might, because group B. is failing to produce great and inspired tragedies and comedies, but because it is trying to produce them in a different way. Moreover, within the group all is high commendation, praise, and love, which will rise to the absurdest heights. I have before me a recent issue of the *Mask*. The ferocious destructive criticism of this periodical is always delightful and frequently suggestive; for contributors to the *Mask* have a lively gift of writing, and, though in common with

every group I have as yet encountered, they would compass the whole world to make one proselyte, they at least understand the formula they are applying, which at once distinguishes them from the greater number of their contemporaries. But, although the *Mask* is positively healthful in attack, it is resolutely blind in commendation of this or that author who happens to advance a theory or reflect the spirit of their enterprise. It is resolutely as blind as a recent celebrated critic of the *Saturday Review*, to whom I shall shortly have occasion to allude more particularly. It is generally possible to predict with accuracy the books and the plays which the *Mask*—I take the *Mask* merely as an instance of universal application—will see and read with approval and gladness. . . .

"My recent critic on the *Saturday Review* is, of course, Mr. Bernard Shaw. Mr. Shaw's career pointedly illustrates the influence for good and evil inherent in every 'movement.' So far as it has led to a questioning of accepted canons, and been productive of hostile criticism searching the weak places of the theatre, it has done excellent work. So far as it has endeavoured to determine the channel of dramatic development, to set up a standard, and erect itself as a positive divine guide for young authors seeking a mode of expression, it has been wholly mischievous. All criticism or production is necessarily suspect that attaches very great importance to method or genre. Mr. Shaw's method, apart from Mr. Shaw, is of as little virtue

or significance as Shakespeare's method apart from Shakespeare. . . .

"Movements, labels, fashions, modes and methods disappear into the pages of literary text-books. The names of important individuals alone remain. Thus, in the dead dull days after Corneille, the French theatre went to sleep and playmakers constructed wooden replicas of the 'classical' model till a dramatist was born, and people suddenly discovered that the classical model was out of date. As a fact, nothing was wrong with the classical model, except that a generation of mediocre 'classicists' had been assuming precisely what their 'romantic' successors in turn assumed—namely, that there was such virtue in the particular mode they affected that it would enable a dramatist who had nothing to say to say it dramatically. The 'classic' *versus* 'romantic' controversy, with the heaps of critical and explanatory rubbish it produced, lives now only for the scholar. The merely literate man is content to know that Hugo was individually great, not that he called himself a 'romantic'; and that, so far as his formula went, it was neither 'new' nor intrinsically important or virtuous. Really, it is amazing to see how frequently big men of a literary epoch accept the criteria of small men, meeting them on their own level. The French classical mediocrity said in effect to the French romantic: 'I have here a mode of expression handed down from our forefathers which enables me without genius to produce great drama.' The great dramatist

answers: 'Your mode is not my mode; it is out of date; it is foolish; if you want to write great drama you must adopt my mode.' This is helping the fool in his folly. Actually the mode matters little or nothing at all; and, in practice, it is of first-rate importance only in an exhausted age. The great men who invent new formulæ are found by their successors really to have disregarded them. . . .

"If we are really to be ready to welcome our next great dramatist when he comes, it is our first necessity to dissolve all the little groups and cliques which invariably show themselves blind and deaf to any but a shibboleth appeal. If Shakespeare were to appear to-day, he would not be performed at the Stage Society (probably the few Shakespeare plays that passed the Censor would be applauded by ignorant crowds at *Drury Lane*, and the critics would discover his real quality from obituary notices in the German newspapers). The present impulse is to reject all work that cannot be conspicuously labelled. The virus of this impulse runs right through the literary and social activities of the period; but it flourishes most actively in the theatre, because dramatic critics are tired men who work in impossible conditions, and are only too thankful that a system of labels should be invented which reduces their work to a minimum. It is by no means confined to the playwrights. The 'new' acting is as full of mechanical trickery as the old; and there are as many unassimilated devices in the 'new' producing. Any trick or device noted as

being ' effective ' is adopted, and run to extermination. Neither managers, nor authors, nor actors seem to realise that another person's technique is no more likely to fit them than another person's coat. There are many actors who deliberately copy from their fellows some tone or gesture which in the inventor's delivery was probably organically significant, but in the unintelligent copyist is mere trick-work ; and there is a whole chorus of critics and authors who think the stage is to be uplifted and redeemed by substituting in plays and players one bundle of tricks for another. . . .

" The truly parochial character of our theatrical production and criticism is never so clearly shown as when a stranger arrives in our midst who is neither bound to a particular group nor committed to a private creed. Briefly, if we cannot label the new product, we usually dismiss it altogether. For proof of this we need go no further back than to the reception accorded to the plays of Tchekoff and Strindberg within the last few years by the advanced theatrical clubs of London. . . .

" Mr. Shaw and the naturalists in the days of their prosperity continue their critical methods of a date when the ' new ' drama was fighting an uphill game. A generous measure of truculence and pose was then excusable. At present, however, this spirit of clique, and absolute belief in the saving grace of a formula to which this spirit has given so monstrous a birth, are more mischievous than salutary. . . .

"Let us beware of anything, either technical or spiritual, that describes itself as 'new' or 'modern.' The new thing to-day is obviously the old thing to-morrow. 'New' was the favourite adjective of the Restoration theatre, which to-day is so far out-moded that from the days of Jeremy Collier it has been most wickedly and wilfully decried and misunderstood. In Charles II.'s time the talk was eternally of the 'new morality' and the 'new theology.' As to the 'new technique' which was to revivify and ennoble the theatres of the Restoration, the Duke of Buckingham tells us about it in *The Rehearsal*: 'You must know this is the new way of writing, and these hard things please forty times better than the old plain way of writing.' We ourselves have to get out of the habit of mechanically taking it for granted either that the new way or the old plain way is in itself a spell to conjure up great dramatists into a circle. The point of importance for us is whether the authors who use this way or that have anything to say. Are they imaginatively gifted? We may leave questions of technical equipment for after-consideration; and then only to ask whether our author's brow, like to a title leaf, foretells the nature of his volume. Does his form fit the matter and his matter the form?"

Such was the gist of my message to the playgoers of Manchester. If I could make it more provocative by wording it anew, I would do so; but I cannot now recapture the fine rapture of a challenge con-

ceived in the humble expectation that the naturalists of Manchester would at least justify their shibboleths. I was disappointed. The challenge was taken up, not by the naturalists in whom triumph has bred complacency, but by Mr. Gordon Craig, with whom I would not then have quarrelled for the world. It is here repeated and directed specifically against the victorious conventions of naturalism—in playing, play-writing and play-producing. For a sharper edge to this provocation I hereby declare that naturalism is unfitted to the English temperament, that its present victorious position is due to an historical accident, and that it will surely be disestablished as a dramatic method as soon as the English theatre becomes once again really national.

We have seen that no convention in the world is good or bad, but the fitness makes it so ; that to pin one's faith to a mode or genre is a common folly of the wise ; that neither naturalism nor romanticism is in itself better or worse than its rival ; that it is the unmistakable sign of a barren period when formulæ are repeated for their own sake on the assumption that of themselves they will help the artist to achieve art ; that the writing of symphonies after Beethoven is idle without the identical inspiration of Beethoven ; that the writing of plays after Ibsen is idle unless it be justified with a divine right to say what Ibsen said ; that the base classicism of French drama after Corneille was due to the same blind faith in a

formula which is responsible for the base naturalism of the English theatre to-day.

The point at which the naturalist method becomes base is very accurately revealed. When the artist finds himself recording the facts of life for their own sake he has ceased to be an artist. He is making precisely the mistake of the French academicians, who, seeing that Racine observed the unities, assumed that by imitating the letter they could achieve the spirit. They saw the unities in Racine as the modern naturalist sees the facts of life in Ibsen, forgetting that the unities are no more the main achievement of Racine than the facts of life are the main achievement of Ibsen. Base naturalism begins precisely at the point where an artist, instead of giving to his vision the likeness of common things and using the illusion of common things merely as language and form, deliberately sets out to record and to catalogue these syllables of style. He mistakes his coins and tokens for true wealth. The great bulk of popular literature to-day is infected through and through with naturalist detail pursued for its own sake—detail inserted into the web of the author's conception, not because it has any real relevance to the idea he pursues, but for its own sake, in a confused presupposition that any reported experience, sentiment, incident, emotion—any fact of common existence down to the number of chairs and tables in a particular house of a particular street of a particular town—has in itself an æsthetic value. Even those authors

to whom naturalist conventions are admirably suited, who would instinctively take the naturalist way of expressing themselves, apart from the modern superstition that it is in itself a magical conjuration—authors like Mr. Arnold Bennett or Mr. Gissing—pack their work with masses of irrelevant detail that make it less a low kind of art than a high kind of handbook to the habits and environment of this or that class of contemporary people.

Base naturalism that merely applies a formula will utterly perish with the first great artist who arises to pursue and popularise another. Great naturalist art—the work of Tchekoff, Ibsen, and Gorki—will no more perish than Shakespeare or Æschylus. To those who say, or tacitly assume, that naturalism holds the field to-day by virtue of its superiority as a method over its predecessors; that any dereliction from naturalism is necessarily degenerate; that art of the future must needs be naturalist, because art of the future must needs be an improvement upon art of the past; that the naturalism of Ibsen necessarily leads the artist deeper into beauty and truth than the romanticism of Shakespeare or the classicism of Racine—for such as cling to this tissue of absurdity no more remains to be urged. A more serious question is already suggested.

It may quite reasonably be argued that particular periods, races and temperaments have a natural leaning towards expressing themselves after a particular manner—that French art tends to

flourish under an academy, being formal and conservative; whereas English art is invariably killed under an academy, being individual and lawless; or that French art under the Grand Monarch was necessarily classical, and after the Revolution necessarily romantic; or that Russian art necessarily runs to naturalism. Any number of questionable propositions may be quite plausibly laid down upon a root assumption that race or the Zeitgeist determines artistic formulæ of the centuries. Prophets who contend that naturalism is the inevitable method of the English theatre during the next hundred years, because it is a method intrinsically fitted to the needs of the time or of the English genius, are at any rate entitled to a formal confutation.

Perhaps the most striking point about the English dramatic revival, so far as it has gone at present, is the enormous influence of foreign models. We have already seen how the English dramatic renaissance received its most violent impulse from the ambition of a small group of authors and critics to bring the English theatre into line with the general European advance. Tolstoi, Gorki, Tchekoff and Ibsen are the fathers of our English dramatic reformation. The impulse came from abroad, though it actually filtered through in the work and influence of English authors. The impulse as it came from Europe was an impulse towards naturalism. English naturalism is the germination upon English soil of a foreign seed. Here was a rushing mighty wind from strange places; and the solitary spark of genius it has so far

fanned into flame is the genius of Mr. Bernard Shaw—who is an Irishman. Certainly there is nothing in the circumstance of its introduction that warrants us in believing that naturalism is ideally fitted to the artistic needs of the English people.

Nor does the history of the English theatre at large justify the assumption. In one period only of English dramatic history has the triumph of the naturalist method coincided with the production of great drama—the period that began with Etherege and ended with Farquhar. It was a period in which every typically English institution and sentiment was in abeyance, so far as the group of men who produced it and supported it were concerned. It is the exception that proves the rule. Compare with this the great period of English tragedy when Shakespeare and his contemporaries were producing a body of dramatic literature which is rightly accepted to this day as definitely English! Shakespeare is English for all time; Congreve is English only for the late seventeenth century. The English genius, if it be by nature fitted to run into any one particular mould, is almost certainly fitted to run into the romantic mould of Shakespeare, rather than the naturalist mould of Ibsen. We shall hereafter discover that the continual burden of Mr. Bernard Shaw's brilliant indictment of the English character—the fundamental text of every one of his plays—is that the English character is incorrigibly romantic; that, so far from loving facts for their own sake (which is the capital sin of a people fatally inclined

to naturalism) the English genius shows itself at its highest power when it refuses them any respect. Mr. Bernard Shaw is right, and we shall shortly perceive that what he charges to our account as a shameful thing is really the national distinction of our life and art. For the present we only note that Mr. Shaw's accusation, on his own showing, points to a fundamental dissonance between the English character and the æsthetic method he would have the English theatre adopt for its expression.

The evidence, then, so far as race is an index, is against naturalism being the inevitable method of a really national dramatic art. But what of that other great determining influence upon thought and its expression, upon the direction in which we look for beauty and the form in which we elect to fashion it? What of the running of years and the lapse of generations? Does English naturalism run with the naturalism of Tchekoff and Zola, of Ibsen and M. Brieux, upon a mightier tide of the spirit than that which is bounded in a single people. Is naturalist art the incarnation of an epoch in human progress? Are we to look for its ancestor to Francis Bacon? It were to consider too curiously to consider so. In any case, those who, believing in the future of naturalism, would identify it with our modern scientific civilisation, attuning it with the throbbing of the great machine we have builded in the last hundred years, may enjoy their fancy without peril to the argument here sustained. Identify naturalism with the conquest of matter,

and you identify it with an enterprise whose vital significance for art already shows signs of exhaustion. The feeling of thinkers to-day and of the multitude to-morrow is to discount the value of that conquest, and to perceive wherein it is barren.

However we limit or widen the scope of our surveying, a conviction will meet us at the end that naturalism is at the ebb. The tide has come magnificently in with noise and spectacle. To many it seems a flood that is mounting yet. The clamour and movement seem still to be setting towards us. Actually the tide has turned. As yet we only perceive it in the motions of small objects captured or left upon the shore.

Something too much of this. A critical point of view is now established whence to observe the future of English dramatic art. We have discarded all idea of there being virtue in any particular mode or method of art, and we have begun to suspect that naturalism is not the dramatic method of the future, at any rate in England. This suspicion may become hereafter a certainty—take root and rise by slow degrees to a positive conviction.

CHAPTER IX

THE FUTURE OF MR. BERNARD SHAW

> All the interim is
> Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:
> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council, and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection.

THE title of this chapter is misleading. It is difficult—and not very wise—to group dramatic movements of the day under separate heads; but to a certain extent it is inevitable if we are to avoid talking in the air. Discussing an important set of critical and destructive influences in the theatre, we had best conceive them—if it be reasonably possible—as typified in some conspicuous figure of the time. Mr. Bernard Shaw will do quite admirably. He is here to be regarded as a technical term. He is a symbolical figure of destruction. He includes Hankin and Mr. Galsworthy. He is a collection of distinguished anarchists. He is our concrete image of at least one aspect of the form and pressure of the time. He is not introduced with the idea of advertising his work or exalting his merits. Mr. Shaw is too well able to look after these things

himself. Nor are we here concerned directly with the future of Mr. Shaw. The future of Mr. Shaw, so far as it exists, is sufficiently provided for in a draft statute of the National Memorial Theatre, which provides for the frequent revival of recent plays of great merit which would otherwise be permitted to pass into a rapid and unmerited oblivion.

The English dramatic renaissance has so far been more a protest than an achievement. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe it as an achievement that has come by way of a protest. Mr. Bernard Shaw, its most vital expression, has protested most; and, in consequence, has achieved most. His plays are well written as a protest against the ancient practice of not writing plays at all. His heroes are practical men as a protest against heroes who were impractical idiots; his heroines live upon beef-steaks as a protest against impossible stage heroines who lived upon modesty and married bliss; his soldiers who eat chocolate creams are a protest against soldiers who ate fire.

We have already seen how Mr. Shaw played an important part in bringing the theatre into touch with English life and letters. We have now to realise to what extent this part was destructive; to discover that the main fury of the movement we are for convenience' sake identifying with Mr. Shaw was a fury of cleansing and purification—an impulse to sweep the theatre clean of exhausted shams, to throw down the unsanctified idols of the stage. Mr. Shaw is the Socrates of the English dramatic

renaissance. He went into the theatres of his day as Socrates went into the market-place. His manner was considerably more aggressive; he tended rather to dig the pit himself for his enemies than to make them the instruments of their own confusion. But, though his methods were different, his intention and effect were the same. The strength of Socrates in his contest with the sophists was that, whereas Socrates stood for common sense, the sophists stood for nothing at all. Socrates would have had no more chance with an interlocutor of fiery convictions and unassailable faith than Mr. Shaw would have had with a theatre that really believed it was a chosen instrument. Mr. Shaw had the advantage of knowing what he wanted, and for what he stood; whereas the theatre of his day knew nothing beyond the fact that it desired to attract into its houses the greatest possible number of people.

Mr. Shaw was by temperament well fitted for the mission of declaring that all was wrong with the theatres of his generation. He has a natural instinct for destruction, a mischievous strain of the bad fairy for whom it is an act of necessary piety to be present at the christening of all babies likely to be too fortunate in an ill-ordered world. Mr. Shaw's first impulse when he perceives everybody quite happy and comfortable is to assume that there must be something wrong. Somebody is not telling the truth. He examines the facts, and in five minutes he has proved that all this happiness and comfort is a sham; that it is a disgrace to some one or other; that

in a well-regulated society it would not be tolerated ; that every paradise is made by fools ; that to be satisfied with life is proof of a naturally vicious disposition ; that people who are happy and comfortable are not really happy and comfortable at all, because they do not know what happiness and comfort is. In a word, Mr. Shaw is fundamentally a Puritan, with a rooted distrust in life as life is understood by the mean sensual man. However much his love of things beautiful ; his candour and honesty of mind ; his open-hearted hospitality for new ideas ; his intellectual sympathy even with the forces that are leagued for his destruction—however these qualifying attributes may disguise the Puritan cast of his mind, and obliterate the harsher features of the Puritan character, he nevertheless remains definitely and obviously the natural enemy of Grangousier and of Falstaff—of all the great figures that stand for the brutal flesh of common humanity. Mr. Shaw is fundamentally a Puritan, and he enjoys to be in a perpetual minority (more especially as he has the genius to make a fortune out of being in a minority). Mr. Shaw has always been in love with exceptions that do not prove the rule. He is by temperament the aptest figure of a man to rise to the height of his stature in a career of protest and perpetual challenge.

Moreover, he came to criticise the English stage in a fortunate hour. He found it infected through and through with precisely the sort of falsehood he was most aptly fitted to expose. Mr. Shaw has a

natural dislike of the English character. He found the English theatre reflecting all the worst vices of the English character and scarcely one of its redeeming virtues. He had an enemy whose throat he would cut in the church, and think it justifiable homicide; and he had an enemy in all but brute force conspicuously inferior to himself in equipment and morale. Mr. Shaw, by nature averse from the English romantic hero, had for his enemy less a romantic hero than a romantic idiot.

Thorough was his word. As critic and playwright he smote the stage-figures of his day. But a critic is only half a captain. Mr. Shaw, when he had told the play-makers of his day, as a critic, what they should do, next showed them, as a playwright, how to do it. He ridiculed romantic war of the fire-eater; and wrote a play of arms and the man, in which romantic war of the fire-eater was the fool of the piece. He ridiculed the stage Irishman; and wrote a play in which the stage Irishman was only permitted to appear in order to show that God's Englishman knew nothing about him. He ridiculed the stage-heroine of the time, who almost answered Iago's ideal of the perfect housewife; and wrote a whole series of plays in which women were brought upon the stage with the express purpose of reminding English audiences that women, like Shakespeare's Jew, had eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections and passions; that they were fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the

same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer. "If you prick them," he shouted, "do they not bleed? If you tickle them, do they not laugh? If you wrong them, shall they not revenge?" People were shocked to be thus reminded. Blanche Sartorious, a very ordinary young woman in Peckham, was something of a monster on the stage. Anne Whitefield, an extremely attractive young woman in Kensington, was something of a harpy and a hypocrite upon the stage. But Blanche Sartorious and Anne Whitefield had very soon fulfilled the mission of their creator, slaying their limelight sisters, grown too delicate and precious to live anywhere but in a badly ventilated playhouse. Mr. Shaw also sent forth a line of heroes who quickly discomfited the pretty fellows, darlings of an age which did not expect stage-figures to have the gait of Christian, pagan, or man. Mr. Shaw's heroes had felt some of the common sensations of humanity. They were susceptible to fear, hunger, self-interest, partiality for a good investment — emotions so strange and unnatural upon an English stage that Mr. Shaw's heroes were at first invariably mistaken for his villains.

Such work was by inspiration destructive. This does not necessarily imply that it had no positive merit. We shall shortly perceive wherein this positive merit lay; for it is necessary to be quite clear as to the precise value of Mr. Shaw's contributions to the drama, if we are to foretell the future of the English theatre with any confidence. But

for the present we must particularly insist that the chief value of Mr. Shaw's plays, so far as the year 1950 is concerned, was that they definitely put an end to an undesirable state of things ; that they shut the door upon any further repetition of monstrous stage-formulæ, out of which all meaning had already departed ; that they let into the theatre the light of common day, till the spectators, blinking in amazement, began to realise that the theatres they had so patiently inhabited for so many weary years had been remarkably innocent of nature's own sweet and cunning hand.

That Mr. Shaw was mainly a destructive influence —that his work was inspired mainly with an instinct to sweep away stale traditions that offended him, mechanical nonsense that outraged his intelligence, consecrated absurdities that lingered only by reason of there being nothing to replace them—this is far from being a merely verbal proposition. It is at the heart of our conclusions respecting the future of English play-writing. Mr. Shaw's naturalism—so far as he was a naturalist—was instinctively adopted by him as the deadliest possible weapon of attack upon the existing condition of things. It was the function of Mr. Shaw's naturalism to cleanse and purify the English theatre against the coming era of accomplishment. Mr. Shaw's naturalism has coincided with a critical era of preparation—an intercalary season of disinfection. When we have clearly realised that Mr. Shaw's work was mainly destructive, we have realised also that naturalism was the

diversion of a dramatic interim—that it is not necessarily the method of progress in the future because it was the method of progress in the past.

Let us take a concrete example from one of Mr. Shaw's plays. *How He Lied to Her Husband* is an admirable instance of Mr. Shaw's salutary treatment of a stage-theme handled for generations by mechanical rule of thumb. Marital jealousy is the crux. It had been assumed for long years by English playgoers that when stage-husbands found that their stage-wives were not exclusively adored by themselves, nothing remained but to discover the interloper and throw him violently from the room with the strongest expressions possible of indignation and contempt. Mr. Shaw, coming into the theatre from a world where social behaviour was not an affair of pennies-in-the-machine, found these mechanical ejections of the poaching philanderer, accompanied with mechanical assertions of the right—the ability being taken for granted—of every Englishman to throw downstairs every invader of his peace, tedious and not wholly true to his experience. Mr. Shaw had perceived that men were not invariably jealous of their wives, that some men even liked their wives to be admired. Accordingly he wrote a play wherein He, She, and Her Husband were discovered at the usual corners of the eternal stage-triangle. He, it seems, had lost some highly inflammatory poems addressed to Her; and, having been to many theatres where Her Husband invariably discovered them, She was considerably alarmed. So, too, was

the audience, expecting, as audiences had till recently good cause to expect, that what had happened before in the theatre would assuredly happen again. He, convinced by Her panic, agreed to lie. Her Husband entered with the poems. Her Husband was assured by Him that the poems were written to Aurora, Goddess of the Dawn, and that He was quite innocent of any adoration. Whereat, to the immense astonishment of the audience, Her Husband took off his coat and went for Him as an insensible young puppy. Such was Mr. Shaw's classical parody of *Candida*—one of the lightest and best of his pieces.

Observe that the dramatic effect of this play hangs almost wholly upon the fact that it is para prosdokian. The comic effect of Her Husband's onslaught upon Him for not adoring Her is entirely due to the fact that Mr. Shaw's audience has been artificially trained to expect Her Husband's onslaught upon Him for a precisely opposite reason. Not only the effect, but the entire value, of the play's motive is that it flatly challenges the motive of the majority of its predecessors and contemporaries. It is an irresistible appeal to play-makers and play-goers to reconsider their position, to re-examine the mechanically repeated orthodoxies of their craft, to revalue dramatic motives in relation to life. The primary importance of Mr. Shaw's story of Him, Her, and Her Husband is not that these three dramatic personages are true to Mr. Shaw's experience of men and women. Its primary importance is that it warns Mr. Shaw's contemporaries

against remaining in the mechanical assumption that the old formula was an invariable law of nature. *How He Lied to Her Husband,* so far as its motive is concerned, would have very little point indeed—very little power to stimulate and amuse us—if we were not viciously predisposed to expect something entirely different. Like the great majority of Mr. Shaw's best people and passages, the people and passages of *How He Lied to Her Husband,* are a delightful surprise. They are destructive of preconceptions. They disturb us and stimulate us with an immediate conviction that the laws of the dramatic commonwealth are at the point of revolution; that henceforth there are no more dogdays; that Mr. Shaw's people, though they are not necessarily the predestined heroes of an English theatre, are very thoroughly and disrespectfully clearing the English theatre of encumbrances.

Run through almost any play of Mr. Bernard Shaw and solemnly ask yourself how much it gains or loses from the mere violence of its contrast with plays of his contemporaries. Bluntschli does not make an epoch in dramatic literature as a profound study of a practical soldier. Bluntschli makes an epoch as a challenge to the accepted stage tradition of a practical soldier. Blanche Sartorious does not make an epoch in dramatic literature merely because she hates the poor and flies into unlovely passions; but because her predecessors and contemporaries had for years been looked upon as incapable of hating anything or of

having any passions to indulge. Blanche is important, not because she is Blanche, but because she is not the domesticated Saint Cecilia she was expected to be. Similarly Harry Trench is not important because he is a singularly true or conspicuously well-delineated young man of the world. He is not important because he is an ordinary young man in love with an ordinary young woman. He is important because he is not the extraordinary young man in love with the extraordinary young woman which the playgoers of his generation expected to see.

Mr. Shaw has, to a large extent, disguised the destructive character of his work by confusing his activities as a playwright with his activities as a sociologist. Mr. Shaw believes that his plays are positively valuable in that they seek to popularise ideas about sex, society, politics and religion which are to have a decisive influence in the development of European civilisation. Mr. Shaw has even pretended to himself and the world at large that his first impulse towards play-writing was the impulse of a social missionary to seize upon a pulpit and a platform too long neglected. He is a philosopher, he tells us, who scatters his doctrines by way of the theatre. He thinks he perceives, for example, that prostitution is partly a matter of pounds and pence, the result of the economic dependence of women. Therefore he writes *Mrs. Warren's Profession.* He thinks he perceives that the medical profession is a conspiracy of experts to fleece the

layman. Therefore he writes *The Doctor's Dilemma*. He thinks he perceives that monogamous marriage with its assumptions of lifelong passion and perpetual proprietory right of the parties in one another has become socially insupportable. Therefore he writes *Getting Married*. He continually disguises the primarily destructive character of his work by advertising it as a campaign of constructive social propaganda.

Mr. Shaw is not the first distinguished man who has extensively erred about himself. Wherein Mr. Shaw's work is positively important, wherein lies the immortal part of him, will be subsequently exposed as a conclusion only reasonable and fair, to a chapter mainly dedicated to a proof that his merits are mainly negative. Certain it is that his positive merit does not lie in social or philosophic ideas. Mr. Shaw in this respect is no more important than Wilde. Just as Wilde imagined that his importance arose from his contribution towards a philosophy of life for the individual which was little more than the philosophy of Pater at second-hand, so Mr. Shaw imagines that his importance arises from his contribution towards a philosophy of life for the community which is little more than a fairly complete collection of the best thought of his time. Wilde was mistaken; and Mr. Shaw is mistaken even more thoroughly than was Wilde. There is nothing, nor ever was anything, very startling or original about Mr. Shaw's ideas in political economy, sex-psychology, or political philo-

sophy. They are common property of some very dull dogs, from whom Mr. Shaw only differs—what an important difference it is we shall shortly perceive—in his ability to express them like a genius.

Mr. Shaw, regarded as an incarnation of the purifying and destructive influences of the interim period of naturalism, includes Hankin, Mr. Granville Barker and Mr. John Galsworthy.

Hankin's destructive energy did not proceed, like Mr. Shaw's, from a spirit welded of Robin Goodfellow and John Knox. Hankin's purifying influence was due entirely to the presence in his nature of an exaggerated sanity. In a robustly constituted individual such sanity is the comic spirit at its highest power. In individuals of low vitality, to be very sane is to be almost mad, for this is too mad a world to be tolerable to the eye that requires for ever a perfect proportion in the design of its affairs. It becomes too grievous to be borne. Hankin was this unfortunate man—too sane to believe in a world of matter and impertinence mixed, reason in madness; not sufficiently robust to stand apart and use it for his mirth. For Hankin the laws of character seemed even more inevitable in fancy than in reality they are. His comedy, like the comedy of Sir John Vanbrugh, began with a distrust of happy endings. Almost his first work was a collection of dramatic sequels—to *Hamlet*, to *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, to *Alcestis*. His comedies that followed were

a further declaration of scepticism in the talisman of a falling curtain to cure all human ills. His was the melancholy cast of a true comedian who watches with foreknowledge the progress of his creatures. He knows they must obey the laws of their nature ; that their characters, inherited or acquired, will not let them off at the last, but exact the uttermost farthing.

He was in this regard clearly most admirably qualified to perform a very necessary and useful part in the destruction of an antique convention of the English stage which had long ceased to have any vital meaning. The ' happy ending ' was the survival of a time when it really corresponded with a conviction that the world was on the whole a happy place ; where, though the rain undoubtedly fell upon the just and upon the unjust, yet Providence somehow contrived to provide the just with an umbrella. But the happy ending, which Hankin so conspicuously helped to abolish, had no justification in any conviction of the practising authors who employed it. It was merely a convention that no matter what the characters in a play might be like they must all somehow contrive to come within immediate prospect of a happy marriage in the last act. There might be no two people in the play susceptible of really civilised intercourse as man and wife. The rule of play-writing was that whereas dramatic personages might make free use of their own characters for three acts of a play—revealing themselves as pleasant or unpleasant, companionable or

misogynist, selfish or unselfish, greedy or continent —nevertheless they must in the fourth act deliver themselves up, hand and foot, to the author, who might marry them all off exactly as he pleased, bid them be happy, and send away his audience with an assurance that their happiness would endure. Hankin revolted against this perverted practice of the popular dramatist. Eustace Jackson in the first acts of *The Return of the Prodigal* reveals himself as a young man with too many brains and too little of the 'will to power.' He was an attractive young man—obviously the hero of the piece. Naturally we expected that he would be rewarded for his agreeable qualities, and his ability to amuse the audience, with the hand of the prettiest marriageable young woman of the play; and that, in order that we might leave the theatre with a comfortable assurance that marriage would bring lasting happiness, we should be discreetly required to understand that Eustace would reform his character with a stiffening of the spine. Conceive the amazement of playgoers and critics when Eustace remained invertebrate to the end; failed to be married off to anybody; and, instead of attaining happiness by sponging on a rich wife (which was the orthodox solution of his fate), attained merely a beggarly two hundred a year by sponging on his relatives. The astonishment of the public was so loud and universal that Hankin had actually to write a *Note on Happy Endings* in defence of this revolutionary practice of allowing

people to keep their characters unimpaired. This note included the unhappy Eustace, the even more unhappy Verreker, and the incomparable Ethel Borridge. Verreker had sinned against the conventional happy ending even more grievously than Eustace. Verreker was on the point of satisfying his audience with the conventional dramatic ending—the redemption of an eternal masculine through the kind offices of an eternal feminine—when suddenly he realised that man is not necessarily born again when he marries a virtuous woman. Verreker not only disappointed his audience at the last hour ; he even suggested a universal scepticism as to the validity of a good match to suspend all the rules that govern the operations of the human will. Hankin found it necessary to justify the scepticism of Verreker ; also to explain why true love, though it be an extremely wonderful experience, was no more able to make a lady of Ethel Borridge than it was able to make of poor Verreker a man of steel.

Apart from Hankin's share in the restoration of style to the English theatre, this was his most important contribution to the English renaissance. He made it his particular share of the enterprise to destroy the happy ending, to insist that the position of the characters at the end of a play should bear some comprehensible relation to their conduct of the earlier scenes. There is no reason in the world why a play should not end happily. There is, in fact, a very good reason why it should ;

for life itself is on the whole a tolerable adventure with at least as much upon the credit as upon the debit side. But there is every reason why a happy ending, if a happy ending is desired, should have a credible foundation. Hankin destroyed the meaningless convention of a happy ending, which was merely an arbitrary and reckless disposition of characters at the fall of the curtain, for whose stability the author, if he were wise, disclaimed all responsibility. Hankin, in fact, destroyed the happy ending which was no ending at all. He very definitely questioned the necessity of a convention that required every play to end with an assortment of marriages obviously so many preludes to fifth-act proceedings in the divorce court.

Mr. Granville Barker, like Hankin, may be in part identified with the destructive era of naturalism. We have very particularly to distinguish between Mr. Granville Barker's past and his future. Mr. Barker has as yet no intimation of what his future will be. We, who enjoy the privilege of foreseeing the sort of plays he will be writing in 1925, are in a more fortunate position. Mr. Barker's past—generally speaking—belongs to the naturalists. His future belongs to the great age of the romantic revival. His work, so far, has consisted in a singularly meteoric career of intellectual wild oats. His present impulse is to be rid of all that chokes the path of revival. His principal offensive weapon, like those of his older comrades, is the imported naturalism of Ibsen and Gorki. He

employs it equally to destroy degraded survivals of false romanticism and mistaken applications of precisely that formula which he himself invokes. At one moment he is united with Mr. Bernard Shaw in a resolute attack upon naturalist comedy that is not naturalist; at another moment he is united with Mr. Poel in a resolute attack upon romantic tragedy that is not romantic. He attacks with equal conviction comedy at the *St. James's* for not giving one sufficiently the illusion of common day, and Shakespeare at *His Majesty's* for giving one the illusion of common day in disastrous perfection. His heroes are a protest against the heroes of Mr. Sydney Grundy. His productions of Shakespeare are a protest against the productions of Sir Herbert Tree. The value of these enterprises is strictly negative. They belong to the spring-cleaning era of the English renaissance. As positive contributions to dramatic art they will have no meaning in 1950. As statements, vigorously negative, of what English dramatic art is determined to be rid of in 1913 their value is inestimable.

The work of Mr. John Galsworthy is negative merit *in excelsis*. Almost the sole merit of his plays is a dogged determination to avoid what Mr. Galsworthy would almost inevitably describe as theatrical. There is in every line of his work a profound distrust of the theatre and fastidious rejection of any device that has about it a relish of the limelight. His people seem perpetually to be avoiding the dramatic clichés of their genera-

tion. Their merit consists in all the commonplaces that they do not utter, in all the obvious things they do not do, in all the expected attitudes they do not strike, in all the fine speeches they do not make. Mr. Galsworthy's plays are of extremely little value as positive achievements. They are immensely valuable as proving that the plays of his contemporaries are imperfect exercises in a method they do not fully understand. "Play-write no more: Mr. Galsworthy doth murder play-writing" is their insistent message; and the message includes himself. Mr. Galsworthy does not really write his plays at all. He presents a situation; and, where the practising playwright of his day would improve the occasion with a speech, he discreetly retires. Actually to write the scene to which he has conducted one might lead, possibly, to dramatic art; but, horrible reflection! it might also lead to something theatrical. Mr. Galsworthy implores his contemporaries not to be theatrical. He kills their ambition to be theatrical by pointedly abstaining from being theatrical. His plays unconsciously spread in the bosoms of practising playwrights an infectious horror of the pitch with which he personally refuses to be defiled.

Mr. Galsworthy is a better symbol of destructive naturalism than any other author of to-day; and if he were a tenth as influential a dramatist as Mr. Shaw his name would more fitly appear at the head of this chapter. Hankin had grace of style that makes his contribution to English dramatic

literature of positive value apart from his share in cleaning the theatre for a genuine revival. Mr. Shaw, as we shall see, is a genius as well as a mere forerunner of better days. Mr. Barker, as also we shall see, will play a modest part in the romantic revival of the next generation. But Mr. Galsworthy's dramatic virtue consists almost wholly in the avoiding of dramatic vices. He has cast out the seven devils of footlights. His house is swept and garnished; and it is desolately bare. He is resolutely determined to leave undone the things a dramatist ought not to do; and there his merit ends. In the winter of 1912 Mr. Granville Barker produced *The Eldest Son* at the *Kingsway*—an almost perfect example of Mr. Galsworthy's dramatic method. *The Eldest Son* is a play of the baronet's heir who misconducts himself with his mother's maid. It is a well-worn theme, at once suggesting a host of inevitable dramatic clichés, stale and meaningless from long abuse. The merit of Mr. Galsworthy's treatment is merely that he avoids them. Thus, when the hero, whose name is Bill, learns from the heroine, whose name is Freda, that there is to be a child of their transgression, Mr. Galsworthy refuses to improve the occasion with so obvious a contempt for all the inadequate things he might have said, and all the ancient things which the majority of his contemporaries certainly expected him to say, that one cannot imagine any playwright ever after venturing to let himself go on the old exhausted lines.

Freda says, "Oh, Bill!" and Bill makes the three following speeches: (1) "Freda!"; (2) "Good God!"; (3) "By Jove! This is——" Whereupon the curtain saves him from committing his author any further. These are tactics of masterly inactivity. The scene is suggested by the players; and the audience supplies the emotion. Mr. Galsworthy has done nothing, except to suggest very clearly that he has avoided doing anything wrong.

Here we have a finished example of negative merit. The useful plays of this present period all share this characteristic of *The Eldest Son*. They are all protests against the exhausted and mechanical theatre of the Lord Chamberlain's period of undisputed supremacy. Moreover, they are almost all naturalist plays. Naturalism imported from abroad has been an instrument of purification of the English stage. It is identified in England with a period of destruction. Its purest examples—the plays of Mr. Galsworthy—are also most completely examples, not in the art of how to write, but in the art of how not to write. Naturalism in England will depart with the self-conscious reaction against dead models which originally inspired it. It has been the method of protest and revolt. There is no guarantee that it will be the method of revival and construction.

It remains that we put ourselves right with Mr. Bernard Shaw. As the most conspicuous dramatic figure of our time we have so far identified him

with the most important movement of our time, a movement negative in its results, more important by virtue of the things it has destroyed than by virtue of the things it has created. This identification is not quite fair to Mr. Shaw, whose plays will run well into this century by reason of a very positive quality. There is an immortal part of him. It is not his ideas about life that matter—his political economy and social philosophy. They will be scrapped with other rubbish of this hateful time. They are the dust raised by an effort after something better in art and life than the eternal assortment of happy or unhappy couples into bedrooms, according to a morality which is old or new with the changing moon. The immortal part of Mr. Shaw is precisely that intellectual buffoonery which he so fiercely repudiates as the source of his real distinction. Mr. Shaw's serious message for mankind would be as tedious as the face of a chiding clock were it not that he has a gift of literary expression second to no English dramatic author (with the single exception of Oscar Wilde) since Wycherley. For want of a better word—less worn with misapplication—we must describe the immortal part of Mr. Shaw as his wit.

It will help us to realise wherein this 'wit' of Mr. Shaw consists if we actually compare him with his natural predecessor. We do not return to William Wycherley quite by accident. There is not the space here to suggest adequately the close analogy between the work of William Wycherley

and of Mr. Shaw. Apart from their identically similar ideas as to sex-morality, their fundamental Puritan bias (in the sense already suggested in this chapter), and their agreeable habit of impudent self-criticism, there is so great a similarity of style between the two authors that one wonders it has not been seized by the curious in literary comparisons. Wycherley was praised for his wit ; and, as in Mr. Shaw, the wit his contemporaries found in him was something more and something less than wit—an amazing clarity and vigour of expression ; a succession of ideas happily and swiftly executed ; an alert intelligence caught perpetually in the act of arresting and playing with something new—a phrase, a figure, a situation, or an idea ; a kind of intellectual horseplay, bloodlessly, but with enormous vigour, aping intellectually in a land of shades the fleshly bouts of the giants of Rabelais ; an impetus of enthusiastic logic carrying readers headlong to the limit of every started theme. If this can be described as wit, then Mr. Shaw's wit is his immortal part. The rest is a collection of moral and political ideas which, whether they be right or wrong, are neither important nor interesting so far as the future of the English theatre is concerned, and a method of dramatic presentation which has served its turn and will shortly be superseded.

CHAPTER X

THE FUTURE OF THE PRESENT DAY

> And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
> Unless you can find sport in their intents,
> Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
> To do you service.

THESE next few pages are not strictly necessary. They may be jumped by readers in a hurry to know about the theatre in 1950. But I cannot help feeling that many people will expect, in a book about the future of the theatre, to find one or two familiar and distinguished names that are associated with the theatre of the present; that these people will feel that the *chapitre à faire* of this little volume is missing if they find in it no word of authors like Sir James Barrie, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. Somerset Maugham, Sir Arthur Pinero, Mr. Hubert Henry Davies, Mr. Sydney Carton, Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Stanley Houghton; or of managers like Mr. Arthur Bourchier, Sir George Alexander, Mr. Cyril Maude and Mr. Gerald Du Maurier. I therefore feel more or less compelled to insert here a few intercalary paragraphs, if only to show that they are quite unnecessary. The future of an institution has obviously nothing to

do with supporters whose achievement it is always to be at one with the present; whose business it is not to start an idea or to lead a movement, but to popularise it. When we have mentioned Wilde and Hankin and Mr. Shaw, there is no need (so far as the future is concerned) to mention Mr. Somerset Maugham, Sir Arthur Pinero, or Mr. Stanley Houghton. Barometers are useful in recording the state of the weather; but they do not determine what the state of the weather is to be. Nevertheless, it is perhaps necessary, before passing to a conclusion, to justify an omission from this study of so many famous names; so many agreeable, popular and clever people; so many excellent craftsmen.

Sir Arthur Pinero is typical of the group with which we are dealing. He is the practising playwright in perfection. His plays, like the plays of Sardou, are journalism in the highest sense. He has always been level with the public, not only in its conception of technique and the machinery of play-making, but in the choice and treatment of his themes. The public that applauded Tom Robertson could without hesitation accept and applaud Sir Arthur Pinero's early farces—*The Magistrate, Sweet Lavender, The Schoolmistress.* The public which began to feel in the air the influence and ideas of Ibsen, and to misunderstand them, could without hesitation accept and applaud *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.* The public which began to read the unpleasant plays of Mr. Shaw

could without hesitation accept and applaud *Preserving Mr. Panmure* and *The Mind the Paint Girl.* Sir Arthur Pinero has continuously timed his delivery and his message to the hour. That he has done this unconsciously, and with an entirely honest belief in himself, only makes him the better journalist. He has never written down to the public, because he has always been on a level with the public. His spirit has been throughout the spirit of Sardou, who paid more respect and attention to the effect of his plays at rehearsal upon carpenters and scene-shifters, than to their effect upon expert critics.

The plays of Sir Arthur Pinero, from *Sweet Lavender* to *The Mind the Paint Girl,* are a priceless document of dramatic history. Therein you may, as an interesting question of technique, precisely fix the year when soliloquies and asides began to be old-fashioned owing to the incursions of dramatic naturalism. Therein you may learn when the teacup-and-saucer heroine began to give way to the more passionate creature who sits at the heart of a social problem. Therein you may decide at what moment of the playgoer's progress towards a misconception of the sweet uses of naturalism he first began to relish pictorial incursions into the suburbs of London. *Sweet Lavender, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *Mid-Channel* are very precious milestones. Naturally enough, not all Sir Arthur Pinero's periods are of equal merit. Sir Arthur is by temperament a

mid-Victorian. The sentimental farces of his first years are his best work. His later plays are by comparison little more than a praiseworthy effort to be level with the time. They typify the refusal of every self-respecting author to be left behind and superseded. Sir Arthur's head has grown old along with the present day; but his heart has remained for ever young. He gave it away to *Sweet Lavender* in the first fine rapture of dramatic composition, and he has never entirely recovered it. His sympathy with Mrs. Tanqueray is imperfect; he does not really know her. He is only sentimental about Paula Tanqueray. He does not know her as Herr Schnitzler knows her. No Englishman does, or would care to own it in a play if he did.

So far as Sir Arthur Pinero's ideal and methods go, he may safely be left out of account in a consideration of the future of the theatre. But there is one respect in which Sir Arthur rises at the present moment almost to the level of a portent. He resembles dramatic authors of the future in all those qualities that fit the man who writes a play to produce a play. His plays, like plays of the future, are the result of a collaboration between the author and his players. Sir Arthur Pinero is a man of the theatre. He is not afraid to use the theatre—to be theatrical. His plays are so entirely of the theatre in its narrowest sense that they are unfit to print. He is an incarnate protest against dramatic authors like Mr. John Galsworthy, who

distrust the theatre, who touch it with the tips of their literary fingers, who invoke the help of a limelight man with something of the sensations of a mediæval professor invoking the devil. It is distinctly to the credit of Sir Arthur Pinero that in an age when men of letters resolutely invaded the theatre—when Hankin, Wilde and Mr. Shaw were setting standards of dramatic style that send one for literary excellence beyond Sheridan and Goldsmith to Etherege and Jonson—he resolutely refused to abandon the prevalent idea of his early years that plays write themselves ; that the theatre is one thing and literature another ; that it is more important for a player accurately to execute funny business invented by the author than to talk English. Sir Arthur Pinero has through these years of revolution stood for a very definite idea in play-making which might otherwise have almost entirely perished—the idea, namely, that plays are intended for a theatre ; that only in a theatre can they fulfil the purpose of their author ; that there is something wrong with a play that can be better enjoyed in a library than upon the stage. Sir Arthur, of course, carried this idea to extremes. Realising there must be something wrong with plays which are better to read than to act, he neglected to realise there must be something wrong with plays which cannot be read at all. The dramatic author of the future will, like Sir Arthur Pinero, be in touch with the theatre ; express himself naturally and easily in terms of the theatre ;

be equally capable of producing his plays, and equally a master of all the devices whereby a play upon the stage of a theatre has immeasurable advantages over a play between the covers of a book. But the dramatic authors of the future will not be afraid of letting their characters talk like a good book, because Sir Arthur Pinero's characters talk like a bad book. They will realise that, though it is important for an author to know what at any moment is the best position upon his stage for the delivery of his lines, and what action he intends the players to adopt, it is equally important that, when they have something to say, it shall be worth saying.

Apart from his obstinate refusal to pay any attention to the movement which has brought the English theatre within measurable distance of an alliance with English letters, Sir Arthur Pinero stands as a barometer of dramatic fashions. His contemporaries fall into two, or perhaps three, classes, according as one of three features prevails in the quality of their work. First there are playwrights who, like Sir Arthur Pinero, accept and popularise the sentiments, emotions and technical methods of the passing years. These men are sensitive to the atmosphere of their generation. They feel what is in the air. Without deliberate plagiary or imitation they react unconsciously to the prevailing influences of the day. Though they would never of their own motion lead the public, or influence the future of dramatic art, yet they con-

trive to keep level with the intellectual minority, to veer with the latest breeze, to be creditably in the van without actually perishing in the breach. Sir Arthur Pinero deservedly leads this battalion of prudent heroes. If the younger recruits can emulate their leader with his persistent vigour and success, so much the better for them and for the public. These are the men who make things popular, who do the spade-work of education, who are always ready on the public's behalf to turn the newest truth into the latest commonplace. They take up every new idea the moment it is ripe for popularity. They drop it when it has become a cliché. Of the younger members of this important group of authors Mr. Arnold Bennett is conspicuous and typical, though he has perhaps less conscience as an artist and more brains as a man of commerce than the majority of his colleagues. Playwrights like Mr. Alfred Sutro and Mr. Stanley Houghton are good examples. Naturally, it is a class which tends to be rapidly recruited and rapidly cashiered. Not many men have the wonderful agility of Sir Arthur Pinero in the art of unconscious adaptation.

Greatly inferior to these very able captains of the industry are authors whose plays must be regarded as deliberate attempts to be in the fashion. They differ from authors like Sir Arthur Pinero in that their work is less an unconscious reaction to prevailing influences of the time than a mechanical imitation of accepted models. They write dramatic variations upon the fashionable air. Their plays are neither

expressions of a temperament nor of anything observed in the life of their time. People who write this sort of play may be—and frequently are—ingenious and talented to the last degree; and there is no more anything morally reprehensible or dishonest in their work than in the work of an expert milliner. There is no necessity to be angry or unkind in their description. They drive a legitimate industry; and so long as they do not pretend to be what they obviously are not—great artists, thinkers, or missionaries—they may be dismissed as useful, amusing and agreeable people, who have as much right to their profits and percentages as has any dealer in goods of marketable value. These writers cannot always be very accurately distinguished from the dramatists whose acquaintance we have already made. It is not always possible to distinguish between work deliberately imitated from a fashionable model and work unconsciously derived from the general stock of dramatic commonplaces. Sometimes the two things are actually present in a greater or less degree in one and the same play. Derivation may be deliberate, or unconscious, or half-conscious. A dramatic author may treat a certain idea in a certain way, either in imitation of an author who has already successfully done so; or because the idea and the method are common property of the tribe; or because he has read and forgotten plays of the same kind; or because he wrongly imagines that he is giving an original turn to something good enough to be repeated.

Mr. Somerset Maugham is an excellent example of the distinction between the work of these two broadly different types. Mr. Maugham began his dramatic career with a play entitled *The Man of Honour*. *The Man of Honour* was definitely a play of the higher type. It was in no sense an earth-shaking performance. It was not a revolutionary play in the sense that *The Importance of Being Earnest* or *Man and Superman* were revolutionary plays. It could have no possible effect upon Mr. Maugham's contemporaries, turn them into a new path, or add one cubit to the general average of dramatic stature. But it was a play sincerely written, with some sense of the value of ideas and methods that were at that moment in the air. It was a play of the type of Mr. Arnold Bennett's *The Great Adventure*, or Mr. Alfred Sutro's *The Perplexed Husband*, or Sir Arthur Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. It was derived work ; but the derivation was not deliberate. Mr. Somerset Maugham's popular West-End plays, on the other hand, are plays of the lower type whose character we are now trying to fix. They are mechanical exercises in approved emotional and technical formulæ of the day. *Lady Frederick* is an academic performance. It has no relation either in manner or matter to the life of the time or to the living theatre of the time. The author who wrote *A Man of Honour* is quite obviously sensitive to what is happening in the theatre and in the world. But the author of *Lady Frederick* has deliberately shut himself off from every influence that might

disturb his ability to imitate the sort of thing that succeeded with his public the day before yesterday.

There is a third type of play infinitely more attractive than these other two—the type of play which Sir James Barrie writes in perfection. Such plays may be described as mildly individual. They have not the strongly marked character of plays that are imitated. They do not, like the plays of Wilde or of Mr. Shaw, set the current of dramatic progress flowing in a fresh direction. At the same time, they are not merely plays of the populariser, framed of commonplaces accepted or about to be accepted; and they are certainly not plays of the professed imitator. They are plays of authors who are as open to the indirect influence of their big contemporaries as are authors like Sir Arthur Pinero, Mr. Arnold Bennett, or Mr. Stanley Houghton. They are equally ready to accept the popular and accepted machinery of the stage. But they have a temperament. Their work has a faintly personal flavour. They have a way of doing nothing—nothing very unusual—with an air. They will have no more influence in shaping the future of the theatre than the professed imitators. They will have less influence in shaping the future of the theatre than the men who at least disseminate doctrines thankfully or unconsciously received. But they fill the stage of their generation happily and with distinction. Sir James Barrie is the most popular of this group. Mr. Hubert Henry Davies and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones are of its best blood. There is a definite flavour about a Barrie play, a

Jones play and a Davies play. There is no flavour about a play by Sir Arthur Pinero or Mr. Arnold Bennett; or, rather, the flavour varies with the seasons. Sir James Barrie, Mr. Jones and Mr. Davies represent all that is best in English contemporary comedy after we have eliminated the pioneers of the revolution.

It is not proposed in these few paragraphs in any sense to cover the contemporary field; or to classify all living dramatists under heads and phrases. This short chapter is here inserted merely to justify the omission of so much that fills the eyes and ears of playgoers to-day. It may possibly have seemed that too much space has been given to authors of one particular school, that Mr. Shaw and the naturalists have received inordinate attention. Why, it may be asked, should Mr. Galsworthy, whose merit is mainly negative, be weighed so much more scrupulously than Mr. Henry Arthur Jones or than Sir James Barrie, whose metal is in some ways so infinitely more attractive? Why should Mr. Bernard Shaw have a chapter to himself, and persist in overflowing into chapters that have very little to do with the actual artistic merit of his work?

The answer is simple. We are not, in these pages, directly concerned with the artistic merit of the work of contemporary authors; but we are greatly concerned in measuring its influence upon the future of the theatre. Mr. Shaw and the naturalists are important as revolutionary writers who have challenged contemporary conventions

and brought about what solemn people would call a transvaluation of all values. These same revolutionary authors have also claimed that the future, even more than the present, is with them and with their methods. It has therefore been necessary to show that the work of these revolutionary authors was in origin and result destructive ; that they hold no mortgage upon the future of the English theatre ; that their task is accomplished and their wages taken ; that the virtue of their methods, though it has had a persistent and a purifying influence upon the theatre of yesterday and to-day, is already outlived ; that they set the pace of a movement which, though it is now exhausted, has prepared for the English theatre an honourable future career, to be run in alliance with the life, letters and national spirit of the English people.

The authors whose title to existence we have in this chapter rather admitted than defined have had no such influence and made no such claim. It need not therefore be inferred that we profess for them any less respect or recognition than people whose names and work have figured more prominently in these pages. There is no assumption that the authors to whom this chapter is inscribed are necessarily of low degree. It is roughly indicated that they are of varying degrees. This equally applies to managers whose names have not figured here in proportion to their public importance to-day. Sir George Alexander has only once in his

career been of vital importance to the future of that theatre which he so conspicuously adorns—at the moment, namely, when, as the unconscious instrument of revolution, he produced *The Importance of Being Earnest.* This does not necessarily mean that Sir George Alexander is not a very cultivated and able manager. Mr. Arthur Bourchier is not yet identified with any play that can have the smallest meaning or influence as regards the English theatre of 1950. This does not mean that Mr. Arthur Bourchier is unworthy of a place in a book devoted to an estimate of dramatic work of contemporary distinction and value. It obviously does mean that Mr. Arthur Bourchier has no part in our present enterprise.

An important feature of the dramatic activities of to-day yet remains. Much pious expectation has been aroused in the minds of many excellent people by local revivals of the masque or pageant. Arguing from these, and from one or two conspicuously successful efforts to raise crops of dramatic genius in villages of the countryside, it has been rashly prophesied that thither we must look for the true revival of the English theatre. Some of the more enthusiastic believers in this work have pointed to the success of the Irish National Theatre as an instance of what can be achieved by way of raising dramatic art in the wilder parts and more rustic places of these islands.

A history and an appreciation of Irish plays and players cannot here be attempted ; nor would it be

pertinent in a review of the English theatre. John Synge, though his appeal is universal, and will easily outlive every one of his contemporaries, is too conspicuously the exception to every rule to be reasonably taken as a sign of the times or measured as an influence upon his generation. But a few words are necessary as to the significance of the Irish movement and of abortive attempts in England to emulate their literary policy of back to the land.

There is no surer sign of an elaborate sophistication than a self-conscious effort after simplicity. One is reminded of the French *noblesse* of the eighteenth century playing at skilled labour in well-appointed dairies and carpenters' shops. Simple life is frequently the last word in complicated civilisation. A deliberate return to the primitive in art argues an exhausted inspiration, just as a diet of oats and water argues an exhausted palate. It means that the artist no longer feels impelled to utter the beauty and significance of the world in his native idiom; that he has reached the limit of decadence in a confidence that language is the end of language. A self-conscious return to primitive forms of expression betrays a belief in expression for its own sake, which is a symptom, not of the simplicity of youth, but of the simplicity of second childhood. The last utterance of a weary generation is a cry for the bauble of infancy. This utterance does not imply a recovery of lost innocence, for which these baubles glittered as symbols of an

opening world; it implies no limpid freshness of the eye crying anew for the moon which seemed within limit of its grasp. Neither the centuries nor the years of a running life can return upon themselves. The belief that they do is a monstrous perversion of the dreary philosophic fallacy of eternal recurrence.

We should, therefore, not readily believe in any movement of art, letters, or life that begins with a repudiation of experience; that calls for a return to the primitive works of our childhood; that would find the art of coming days in places where the art still lingers of days that have passed. If we believe in such a movement, we should at any rate be honest with ourselves. Such a movement is only justified if we have definitely lost faith in the present and the future. The attitude of its disciples implies that all beauty is already uttered; that the power to utter in fresh terms a world that still is fresh has departed from us; that the living speech of to-day and to-morrow is incapable of a great message; that a deliberate return to the idiom of dead minstrels is all that is left for this barren time. If we devoutly believe this, then is an enterprise like that of Mr. Yeats and the Gaelic League the only possible salvation of beauty in a world whence inspiration has departed. On the other hand, if we have faith in the apostolic succession of the artists, then we may see in this enterprise of recalling the past and washing our language clean of all that can associate it with

images of the present little more than a pathetic recoil of sensitive minds outraged by the accidents of a period whose artistic message is yet awaiting delivery.

No art of the future can come of a self-conscious stripping from art and language of all that links it with the present. Deliberate naïvety—as the phrase implies—is one of those preposterous contradictions only possible at a time when all things are tested, when nothing is held fast. It is precisely that experiment of all experiments made in a period of transition which can lead to nothing. The work of Mr. Yeats is valuable more as a protest against the misuses of our tongue to-day, than as an instrument for its perfection.

But the Irish theatre is in its playing associated with artistic naïvety at the other extreme from Mr. Yeats' studious discarding of the rags of civilisation. When the Irish players first came to London they really had that art which conceals the artist. They played with the simplicity that came of an emotional sincerity, unconscious of itself, flowing naturally with the scene. Theirs was really the innocence of Adam naming the beasts in Paradise. Their playing was work of the amateur in a noble sense. It was the same artlessness that in Dorchester and Aldbourne had captivated civilised auditors with glimpses of Arcadia. The Irish players had, of course, immensely more native charm than the players collected into his village theatre by Mr. MacEvoy or than the Wessex interpreters of Mr.

Hardy. But it was work of the same kind—racy of the soil, sprung from an instinct unspoiled with self-knowledge.

Mark what follows. The fate of the Irish players is eloquent of what happens to all uncivilised 'ports and happy havens' as soon as they are discovered for the spirit and profit of a sadder and wiser generation. The Irish players came, as everything good must eventually come, to London. For two successive seasons they played to houses empty or discreetly papered. Visitors who loved their art attended night by night; and, if they had a public voice, used it in their behalf. They implored the London playgoer to avoid for a night or so the stuffy themes and threadworn artifice of the fashionable theatres; to journey into the far west of Sloane Square and behold how a wilderness had blossomed like the rose. Would the lovers of the Irish theatre had been more wisely jealous of their trove! London, for once in a way, pricked up its ears, went to the Irish theatre, and found it was being amused. In 1912 the Irish players were no longer the private delight of their original friends. They were a public institution. They played to fat houses. They were invited to America. They were asked to appear as a star variety-turn at the *Coliseum*. No company in the world could long be innocent in the face of the systematic and enormous temptation to which the Irish players were at this time subjected. Simplicity that can fill a London theatre, where all the cunning

of the practised merchants is at fault, will soon be simplicity with reservations. The first friends of the Irish players were now compelled to look sadly on while they improved in the wisdom of this world quite out of recognition. They were now the latest sensation of a sophisticated audience; and their playing insensibly altered to meet the situation.

Equally significant was Mr. MacEvoy's adventure with the Aldbourne villagers. This company never had the native grace of the Irish players, but in Aldbourne they were happily met. Conveyed into London, it was perceived that between the artlessness of the amateur and the art of genius lies a whole wilderness, to be painfully traversed, of necessary discipline in necessary craft. This art of the soil—this naïvety of the natural man—is the other extreme of civilised artistic achievement. It must first be destroyed and afterwards re-fashioned. Is the English theatre to be born again, as Medea predicted of Jason, after a preliminary wholesale massacre of local debating and dramatic societies? The deterioration of the Irish players from the moment of their contact with the English public, and the ineffectiveness of Mr. MacEvoy's villagers in a theatre of the town conspicuously discourage the hypothesis.

As to the masques and pageants which in the last few years have swept the country like an epidemic, no one who has borne a part in these enterprises is seriously able, on their behalf, to proclaim a national revival of dramatic art. The greater number of

these were country meetings of fashionable people playing the perennially delightful game known to children of all ages as 'dressing-up.' At best they were an elaborate fancy-dress ball. At worst they were conspicuous instances of precisely that deliberate cult of innocence and simplicity which is the last possible quarter whither we should look for a revival of the arts. They correspond with the activities of a large class of people who imagine they can recapture the sixteenth century by writing 'Merrie Englande' upon invitations to a contest of brass bands—people whose taste has busily littered the country with unspeakable rough-cast and half-timbered houses in the garden suburb manner; who imagine they are putting back the clocks of history by measuring time with a sundial.

For better or worse men are now gathered into cities. From cities where the pulse of modern life beats fastest, where contemporary interests most thickly crowd, where each moment passes as an intensity between the forgotten past and the enigmatic future—thence must the art of to-day and to-morrow burst into its only spontaneous and sincere expression. Only those who believe that modern life will never find a messenger, that it is insusceptible of a fresh miracle of annunciation, will turn humanity back upon its traces and look for the art of the future in a studied cultivation of the past.

CHAPTER XI

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH DRAMA

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.

THE theatre is now swept and garnished. The dramatic critic, or expert in what the public is supposed to want, has disappeared. Intelligent audiences are in living contact with intelligent actors and intelligent authors. The stage is ready to take a level place with the fine arts. It has recovered touch with English letters and life. As an instrument it has been tuned to the delivery of music in its proper voice. The conditions of playing have been improved past recognition by the abolition of star performances and of the system of long runs. The intimacy of the dramatic author with crafts of the theatre has sent packing that significant figure of our transition—the producer who so prominently thrust himself between the author and his interpreters. A generation of revolutionary writers has caused every convention of our time to be tested; has by precept and example killed off the brood of mechanical stage figures and formulæ with which the theatre had perforce to be unemcumbered. Symbolic

of a recovery of the English theatre into sanity and life, the censorship of stage plays has been swept away. A National Theatre partially independent of the public has shown that to be independent pays better than to be perpetually asking which way is the wind. The speculative manager has disappeared. All, in fact, is ready for a national revival of English drama. But the most important and difficult task remains. How is this magnificent pedestal to be filled? So far we have been mainly concerned with machinery, only incidentally with its uses. Whence is the drama of the future to spring? Wherein will be the inspiration of Melpomene restored? Where are the authors now who in 1950 will be the stay of our English theatre?

Let us recall the career of a playwright, still young, as playwrights go, and for many years yet to be a prominent figure of the stage. Mr. Granville Barker, as an author of plays, is an excellent peg for our discourse upon the future direction of English drama. Mr. Barker began his author's career with a play which, for his age, was, without hyperbole, amazing. *The Marrying of Ann Leete* was not a masterpiece, but it must have seemed to Mr. Barker's contemporaries of the late 'nineties the promise of masterpieces to come. It revealed an author untouched by the rampant destructive naturalism of his friends—an author obviously fitted to march into the empty theatre (after the iconoclasts had passed) in the vanguard of a romantic renaissance. The theme alone of *The Marrying of Ann Leete* marked it sharply off

from plays like *Arms and the Man* and *The Silver Box.* The woman of fine blood breaking from the prison of her caste to find reality upon earth was a creature of another world than that in which the heroines of her time were moving. Nor was the method of her portraiture less remarkable. No methodical and reasoned exposition was here ; not the least care to give her that illusion, so precious to them that fashioned her contemporaries, of being of the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century. She was presented romantically—in the half-light where illusion is built up of creatures who embody, not the particular ache of this generation or that, but the common burden of all men and women. Ann Leete lighted to her room in the fall of her wedding-day is, for the English theatre, a more precious and a more significant figure than Nora Helmer slamming the door upon *A Doll's House.* She is the woman of our future stage, who has found the world, in succession to the perturbing Helmers, who have lost it. She is the younger generation.

The author who wrote *The Marrying of Ann Leete* was obliterated by the author who wrote *The Voysey Inheritance, Waste* and *The Madras House.* The author who in his nonage had looked unconsciously forward to 1950 was thereafter content to bear a part in the merely destructive campaign of his contemporaries. That Mr. Granville Barker in his impressionable years fell into the hands of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy is a tragedy of English dramatic literature. Whether he will win entirely free of

these influences and adorn the theatres of 1950 is not our business to determine. But Mr. Barker's career is too significant to be lightly passed over. To measure the extent of Mr. Barker's dereliction from *The Marrying of Ann Leete* is especially instructive. It enables us to point quite definitely in the direction of our progress.

The perpetual conflict in the work of Mr. Granville Barker between his acquired habit of naturalism and his original instinct to write against the grain of his period is in microcosm an exact image of the passing moment. Mr. Barker has written plays and produced plays; and he has justified them conclusively in that they answer exactly the requirements of the naturalist formula. But his practice often betrays an uneasy sense that all that answers exactly the requirements of the naturalist formula is not necessarily inspired.

Mr. Barker's Shakespeare productions at the *Savoy* theatre in 1912 were in this respect an eloquent commentary on the present condition of the English theatre. Mr. Barker avoided the base uses of the picture stage, admitting that the illusion at which Shakespeare aimed was not the illusion of a fair copy of natural objects. Mr. Barker's decoration was conventional. He did not aim at filling the spectator's eye, or at commanding his attention. He aimed at leaving the spectator's mind at liberty to seize each hint of the poet as it came into his verse. Mr. Barker's decoration did not invariably fulfil his intention. An active artistic

middleman intruded into his calculations who insisted that his decorations should be very particularly noticed. Shakespeare was not allowed to turn Mr. Norman Wilkinson's Garden of Olivia into his own Garden of Olivia. On the contrary, Shakespeare's Garden of Olivia was turned into Mr. Norman Wilkinson's. But this was an accident and not the intention of Mr. Barker's enterprise. Mr. Barker struck very definitely at the naturalists in that he aimed at decorating Shakespeare, and not at illustrating him. Mr. Barker, when he did this, was the author of *Ann Leete*, relying as a producer upon the romantic method of suggestion.

But the author of *The Voysey Inheritance* was equally conspicuous, and with lamentable results. Shakespeare was not a naturalist. He did not care to give back to his creatures, or to the progress of his scene, a faithful resemblance to the life whence he had drawn them. He did not see Perdita from the point of view of a local education authority. He did not write in prose, and he did not mean his phrases to be taken with the kind of precision so useful and necessary in drawing a legal document. Mr. Barker betrayed, in his Shakespeare at the *Savoy*, a tendency to ignore these commonplaces. Mr. Barker argued about Perdita like a naturalist, and frequently lost the meaning of the text of Shakespeare by too closely translating it in the action. Shakespeare, for example, intends us to see in Perdita an obvious princess obviously

disguised. Mr. Barker, instead of taking his obvious princess for granted, argued that Perdita, having been brought up by a shepherd, would in life have the bearing and the habit of a shepherd's daughter, with (since Mr. Granville Barker believes a little in heredity) some inkling of the blood as to her royal parents. He emphasised her rusticity rather than her royalty, giving us the spectacle of Perdita bobbing a milkmaid's welcome to her shearing.

As an instance where too close a translation of the text into action gave a result equally lamentable as this too close reasoning about character, the opening lines of *Twelfth Night* will readily serve:

> "If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it; that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again! it had a dying fall:
> Oh! it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour. Enough; no more;
> 'Tis not so sweet now, as it was before."

Mr. Barker translated this as follows: First there must be music; and it must be the performance of a definite piece of music containing one strain at least which has a dying fall. Mr. Barker, accordingly, arranges that a string trio shall perform an air; that the Duke shall listen to it quite attentively; and that, when the air is finished, the Duke shall ask them to repeat it; that the aforesaid air shall be solemnly re-played; that, when it has been thus repeated, the Duke with the

pragmatical air of a critical musician shall pronounce it "not so sweet now as it was before." Perhaps this, being written after a lapse of over a year, is an exaggerated account of the scene as played at the *Savoy*. But it is strictly true of the way—the attitude of mind—in which Mr. Barker approached it, and of the method of strict translation he employed. The point to note is that he interrupted a beautiful speech, clearly intended to be spoken as a whole, in order that the Duke's wish to hear a particular phrase repeated might be literally fulfilled. Only a producer misled by the evil habit of this present time could go so far astray. A producer who had lived only with Shakespeare; who was uncorrupted by imported fashions from Norway and Russia; who had written only *The Marrying of Ann Leete*, and was incapable of *The Voysey Inheritance*,—such a producer could not have so far commingled impertinent naturalism with romantic comedy as, in one and the same production, to give back one piece of Shakespeare to his generation and to mar the other. Mr. Barker, divided between two methods in the production of Shakespeare, is typical of 1913. We are actually upon the threshold of a long farewell to the models of Mr. Galsworthy and the post-Leete models of Mr. Barker. But the farewell will be long in saying. It will be several years before the reaction is swinging with sufficient violence to be detected beyond mistake as the most important movement of our time.

Very significant is the career of Sir Henry Irving. It is customary to applaud the genius of Irving and to deplore his judgment. What might he not have done for English drama, runs the thought of many excellent critics, had he cared as much for the play as for the player, had he come to terms with the revival of the 'eighties and 'nineties. It is undeniable that Irving wasted his great imagination upon worthless plays; that he wrought a miracle upon dead matter by play-making hacks who were filling the theatres of his generation with rubbish since swept into oblivion by the followers of Ibsen. But this does not altogether dispose of Irving. Why Irving never came to terms with naturalism was that Irving was too English. He did not measure a play by its quality but by its kind. The English people, so long as they remain a people with a definite sense of the theatre, will always like the kind of play which Irving accepted. When you find an Englishman preaching the unities, or clamouring for the conventions of a fourth wall, suspect him. Perhaps he is an Englishman who is happiest when in Paris. Perhaps he is an Irishman (like Sheridan, Wilde and Mr. Bernard Shaw, the doyens of our comedy). Perhaps he is only an English play-maker who has unconsciously adopted or intentionally apes an imported fashion. Whatever he be by birth or fashion, he will have very little to do with the coming revival. The walking spirits of dead men will in 1950 be more familiar with the English stage than is the county councillor

to-day, and a dramatic personage who speaks like an angel will be recognised as more true to the spirit of English life than one who speaks like the latest candidate for the Chiltern Hundreds. English people in a theatre desire a miracle—the great exceptions of life that prove the greater rule. They desire to see Ann Leete lit with a rush-candle to a strange fate. They desire to see how she stood from the ranks and adventured. They do not desire to see how her fellows went to unremarkable death decently and in order. They do not desire to be reminded that matches made in heaven rarely work upon earth, but that this particular match was mysterious and pitiful. They hate to see the grinding of inevitable law. Life to the English mind is a succession of wonderful things unclassified, unexpected, irreducible to reason. It is not the mind of a naturalist : it is even less the classical mind. It is, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has accusingly prophesied against us, an incorrigibly romantic mind.

English people should accept the charge. It is their birthright and not a shameful thing. That Mr. Shaw persistently has used it as an infamous reproach is due, partly to his incorrigible superstitious belief in the validity of common sense, partly to an instinctive policy of self-protection, partly to justifiable bad temper with a condition of things in the theatres of his youth and middle age that were truly appalling. Mr. Shaw was driven to his indictment of English romantics by the natural bias of a

mind that is only happy in the broad daylight of what is reasonable. He was able to drive his indictment home because the romantics he attacked were mechanical, lifeless romantics of a theatre in which every living thing had long been asphyxiated. His successful campaign of destruction is no argument that romantics are wrong—still less that they are false to the English character. The wheel is to-day full circle. In place of the dead formulæ of romanticism we have the dead formulæ of naturalism. In place of the superstition that by writing plays in the manner of Wills or Lytton we are necessarily writing good plays, we now have the superstition that by writing plays in the manner of Ibsen or Mr. Galsworthy we are writing good plays. Such is the superstition which inspires men like Mr. Stanley Houghton and Mr. Arnold Bennett. The presence of this superstition is itself a proof that the hour of the naturalist is already sounded—that his inspiration is outworn and his models at the point of being discarded.

Prophesying as to English drama—now that English drama is a member of English life—is of necessity prophesying as to the direction of English thought and morality. The restoration in the English theatre of a type of play loosely constructed after the English or Shakespearean fashion —the play of simple motives, rapid movement and poetic rendering of to-day's passion in the raiment of forever—is but the flower of that great spiritual revival whose signs even now are showing. The

generations whose English works are written in the plays of Mr. Bernard Shaw have wandered forty years in that immemorial wilderness wherein all nations are periodically lost—the wilderness not of that modest doubt which is the only beacon of the wise, but of that intellectual arrogance which rejects a superstition of the priests to fall into a superstition of the lawyers (as when Rousseau proclaimed the 'law of nature'), or into a superstition of the scientists (as when Huxley proclaimed the ultimate nescience of natural philosophy). It is difficult to realise to-day that the great event of the later years of Victoria was a dispute between religion and science as to which had eaten most of the Tree of Knowledge. Echoes of this contest still ring in remote parishes of England. Why the scientific materialist imagined he was getting any nearer to the Absolute First Cause—or whatever he called that evil genius which generations before as a Pillar of Cloud by day and a Pillar of Fire by night had led the Hebrews so consistently in a vicious circle—will be difficult for the happy young people of to-morrow to realise. But we have to remember how within living memory it was actually a matter for intellectual triumph in the scientist, and panic in the priest, that the scientist was able to tell people the atomic weight of hydrogen, and that the priest was unable to contradict him; that the discovery of the properties of matter, or, as it was arrogantly termed, the conquest of nature, was actually regarded as of itself an appreciable advance

in the direction of grasping the mysteries of life and death. For even so much as alluding to this extinct and barren controversy an apology is at this happier time due to a civilised reader. The allusion is, notwithstanding, pertinent. The aftermath of the intellectual and spiritual disturbance caused by the turning of Western civilisation into the paths of material progress, with its conquest of nature, its measurement of prosperity in terms of wheat, and its glorification of man's cunning of hand and brain, is the period, through which to-day we are passing, of desperate interrogation—a period in which moral, religious and philosophical values have all to be reconsidered, society rebuilt, the framework of existence redescribed. We have to recover the two essential elements of a sane career —to redetermine absolutely the conventions of conduct and the dogmas of religion. All great art—dramatic art included—has to do with the adventures of an individual soul, not, as now, in search of truth uncertain ; but in conflict with truth assured. When the laws of conduct are fixed ; when honour is not merely good or bad as thinking makes it so ; when the conscience of the community runs infallibly according to fixed ideals of the perfect citizen ; when there is no question as to what is right or what is wrong, but only a tremendous and sustained interest as to who is right and who is wrong ; when the sole dramatic question in the life of a hero is not, as now, whether he is really a hero at all, but whether he will ultimately kill the dragon

of his fate; when we are invited, not, as now, to wonder whether Arthur was in the right of that affair with Guinevere, or Lancelot in the wrong, but to wonder at and to feel the tragedy of a blazon soiled; when the whole world is no longer a nightmare wherein all motives and springs of action when pursued dissolve or turn upon them that follow a countenance wherein the lineaments waver and change; when St. George upon his quest asks, not, as now, to know whether he be a fool or hero, but to know only where is the monster of his seeking; when, in a word, the root conventions of morality and honour, on which society is founded, are recovered and put upon the tables of a new religion—then will the drama naturally recover simplicity and power.

These years are at hand. We cannot long continue in this period of discovery. The image of this time—its complete and most forcible expression—is to be found in the life of that tortured prophet and adventurer into the unknown—August Strindberg. A civilisation can no more rest in the stage which we find incarnate in August Strindberg than Strindberg himself could rest in the inferno of his middle period. The pain of readjustment, of fitting the spirit anew to a changed environment, belongs only to a period of transition. It implies ultimate peace and certainty renewed. Our purpose hardly requires us to speculate as to how we shall emerge from that same adventure which sent Strindberg out into the wilderness to be tormented of devils,

and to emerge by way of the valley of mysticism into peace. But it clearly requires us to realise that this peace and this certainty must come; that life will again go forward as a play whose conventions are fixed and ordered; that man may henceforth defy the heavens, but no longer be uncertain whither his challenge is addressed; that the laws of this mighty stage will be at least so clear as to suffer the spectators to be sure where their applause or pity must be bestowed, and to be thrilled with a contest whose rules are not in doubt.

That the time is ripe for this restoration is seen in every straw that blows. The changes of this present time are best summed in the philosophic revolution which is typified in the conviction that life, ascending the ages, no longer, as was once maintained, takes blindly the line of least resistance, but follows consciously the line of most advantage. The popularity of a teacher like Professor Bergson is not entirely due to his literary felicity, his charming address and the amiable blend of metaphysical with scientific speculation which has always appealed to dilettanti philosophers. It is due more to his sense of our present need for a restoration into physical existence of something positively teleological. M. Bergson gives back to the universe a soul of goodness in things evil. He has restored Jehovah in terms of biological science. He meets the spiritual needs of the present; and it is therefore that he has so irresistible a vogue.

Even more significant is the trend of artificial æsthetics. This, to-day, is all in the direction of restoring to art its necessary conventions. The heritage of yesterday is the base naturalism which unconsciously assumes that the conventional element in art is a clog ; that art is great in proportion that conventions are eliminated ; that it is an adequate defence of a piece of art that precisely thus it was heard, seen, or inferred from a piece of life. The tendency in criticism now—not the criticism which merely reflects the fallacies of the popular work of the day, but criticism that looks forward to the coming age and feels the breath of the unborn spirit of to-morrow—the tendency of criticism now is rather to exaggerate the value of forms and symbols consciously employed by the artist and immediately eloquent for the people, of fixed morality and of a dogmatic religion. Criticism which puts the hieratic conventions, the grave simplicity, the unvarying formality of Egyptian art above the comparatively unfettered democratic exuberance of Greece will not have a deep or lasting influence upon the artistic progress of modern Europe. Nevertheless, that such criticism is to-day being written and widely discussed is an eloquent testimony to the violence of a reaction, already due, against the tacit heresies of a critic like Mr. Bernard Shaw, who solemnly maintains that photography is a fine art for precisely those qualities which put it beyond the category. Without going to the extreme of the Oriental position—a position which denies

the artist any function beyond that of formal decoration—we may yet accept so much doctrine of the new school as admits our main contention—namely, that the dramatic art of 1950 will in form arise from a recognition of the necessity and value of conventional simplicity, and will in material be ruled by a national reassertion of the laws of morality and the dogmas of religion.

The most important result of this national recovery will be the complete disappearance of didactic art. Didactic art is the invariable symptom of a period of interrogation. The instinct to enjoy what is beautiful is for the moment less imperative than the instinct to look for what is true. Art for its own sake is a luxury the time cannot afford. The problems of existence are too instant. The spiritual energies of sensitive and thinking men are devoted to the work of readjustment, of fixing anew the principles of conduct. They seize upon the theatre and the press, not as artists to turn to forms of beauty the simple and sure things of life, but to rediscover what is simple and what is sure. They are less artists than men who quarry the material of which art will in future be made. Yesterday and to-day, the philosopher, the publicist, the politician, the economist, the preacher—these usurp the instruments and forms of the artist. Their generation is passing, and the artists of the future will inherit their labours, building the palace of art upon the laws of society restored, the principles of morality reaffirmed, the dogmas of religion reframed. Till

this be accomplished neither the work of the world, nor the art of the world, can come to the fulness of power. For this is the end and sanction of authority —authority which declares what is true for all men, for ever reasserting the law and the prophets to fit the running years—that the generations, resting in authority, may build happy houses for their common needs, and beautiful temples. Not till religion is refashioned, not till the gods are set again on high, will the temples of our art of the future be raised. Not till the national conscience is again single and at rest shall we recover the capacity to build great art upon the struggle of human wilfulness with human will; of the tragic protagonist ensuing the evil that he knows; of the passionate hero in conflict with the irremovable laws of his time and fate. The didactic art of to-day is seeking to descry the banners by whose inspiration our heroes of to-morrow will ride forward to the test.

Dramatic art of the future will, in a word, be catholic art. It will be universal in appeal and based upon authority. It will beautifully express what is common to all men—the common bond of a code new fitted to the time. Art will no more be the arrogated privilege of a minority of hard-thinking pioneers, of men who in the light of common reason are seeking restlessly to destroy or frantically to recover shibboleths for the general ease. The period of these men is passing even now in the dawn of a catholic renaissance. With this renaissance will

come a new delight and wonder in the procession of life. To-day may be figured as a crowd of which each unit is lost among his fellows. In confusion and great loneliness the artist retires within himself; and, in a frenzy of introspection, discovers, proclaims and values that which marks him out—saves, as it were, his spiritual identity—from the unintelligible throng. We see collected apart, in this corner or that, small knots of men of the same habit and conversation among themselves, but proud of their distinction from the vulgar. Some are devising a new religion; others are drawing the foundations of a new state; all are agreed that the bonds are broken which once made of the mob that surges about them a people and a congregation. The great romantic revival of English drama will be due when this distracted crowd 'falls in' to a mightier music; obeys a more glorious discipline; marches to a greater purpose than is dreamed of to-day by militant soldiers of the Marseillaise. This dramatic art of the future will restore the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin; insisting upon the strife, the passion, the power and the glory of life upon solid earth, beneath the discipline of whatever gods there be restored. When the gods are conspicuously in heaven, then man may at last send forth Prometheus and watch his great adventure. The lists are set, and the rules of the game are plainly written. Great art has not to do with ingenious sophistries confounding heaven and earth; but with the emotions of simple men whose gods are

visible and mighty till they are overthrown. Great art makes no terms with cold philosophy. It is not a hard saying to be interpreted by wise men. It is the rhythm of the common tread of humanity—forward into the future.

INDEX

Achilles, 61.
Actor-manager, 19–29.
Æschylus, 127.
Ainley, Henry, 44.
Alcestis, 144.
Aldbourne, 170, 172.
Alexander, Sir George, 2, 6, 9, 109, 155, 166.
Alexander, J. W., 80.
Apron, stage, 68, 72.
Archer, William, 94, 97.
Aristotle, xi.
Arms and the Man, 176.
Arthur, King, 186.

Bacon, Francis, 130.
Ballet, 2.
Bancrofts, the, 104.
Barker, Granville, Dedication, 2, 6, 11, 25, 34, 35, 44, 46, 53, 59, 60, 66, 71, 72, 77, 90, 98, 101, 103, 144, 148–9, 175.
Barrie, Sir James, 7, 108, 155, 164.
Beerbohm, Max, 7.
Beethoven, L. von, 47, 80, 125.
Beggar's Opera, The, 104.
Bennett, Arnold, 127, 161, 163, 183, 187.
Bergson, Henri, 187.
Betterton, T., 85.
Björnson, B., 97.
Blood of the Innocent, The, 85.
Bluntschli, 141.
Borridge, Ethel, 147.
Bottom, 30, 116.
Boucicault, Dion, 53.
Bourchier, Arthur, 37, 155, 167.
Buckingham, Duke of, 124.
Bunty Pulls the Strings, 35.
Burbage, Cuthbert, 2, 69, 85.

Candida, 80.
Carton, Sydney, 155.
Caste, 103.
Censor, 92 and note, 102. *See also* Chamberlain, the Lord.
Chamberlain, the Lord, 5, 92–111. *See also* Censor.
Charles II., 124.
Charley's Aunt, 81.
Chesterfield, Lord, 92.
Coliseum, the, 3, 171.
Collier, Jeremy, 124.
Comedy Theatre, 36.
Congreve, W., 36, 41, 67, 129.
Corneille, P., 121, 125.
Covent Garden Theatre, 3.
Craig, Gordon, 45, 58, 59, 125.
Critics, Dramatic, 18–29.
Crummles, 85.
Cymbeline, 114.

Daly's Theatre, 12.
Davies, Hubert Henry, 155, 164.
Deirdre, 114.
Disraeli, B., 94.
Doctor's Dilemma, The, 143.
Doll's House, A, 100, 102, 105.
Dorchester, 170.
Drama, 45.
Dramatic sequels, 144.
Drey, Raymond, 118 n.
Drury Lane, 13, 72.
Du Maurier, Gerald, 155.
Duke's House Theatre, 85.

Eadie, Denis, 35, 77.
Eldest Son, The, 151.
Electric theatre. *See* Kinematograph.
Etherege, Sir G., 65, 129, 159.
Euripides, 83.

Falstaff, 84.
Farquhar, G., 2, 129.
Fielding, Henry, 93.
Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston, 72.
French, Messrs. Samuel, 106.
Frohmann, D., 79.

Gaelic League, 169.
Gaiety, the, 12, 13.
Galsworthy, John, 39, 71, 83, 113, 132, 144, 149–52, 158, 176, 178, 183.
Garrick Theatre, 37.
Gay, J., 104.
George, St., 186.
Getting Married, 143.
Ghosts, 100, 102.
Gilbert, Sir William, 104.
Gissing, George, 127.
Globe Theatre, 85.
Gogol, M., 97.
Goldsmith, O., 159.
Goodfellow, Robin, 144.
Gorki, M., 97, 127, 128, 148.
Great Adventure, The, 35, 163.
Griffith, Ellis, 90.
Grundy, Sydney, 149.
Guinevere, 186.

Hamlet, 72, 84, 144.
Hankin, St. John, 69, 103, 105, 132, 144–8, 150, 159.
Hardy, Thomas, 98, 170.
Harrison, Frederick, 36.
Harvey, Martin, 44.
Hauptmann, G., 97.
Haymarket, 36.
Henley, W. E., *Margaritæ Sorori*, 58.
Hindle Wakes, 36.
His Majesty's, 13, 59, 61, 149.
Horniman, Miss, 36.
Hotspur, 84.
Houghton, Stanley, 36, 155, 161, 183.
How He Lied to Her Husband, 139–141.
Hugo, Victor, 121.
Huxley, T. H., 184.

Ibsen, Henrik, 40, 65, 97, 102, 104, 116, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 148, 156, 179, 183.
"Idealism," 113, etc.
Importance of Being Earnest, The, 105, 163, 167.
Incorporated Stage Society, 40.
Inheritance, 176.
Irish National Theatre, 167–72.
Irving, Ethel, 13.
Irving, Sir Henry, 181.

Jackson, Eustace, 146.
Joint Select Committee (1909), 94, 99.
Jones, Henry Arthur, 7, 155, 164.
Jonson, Ben, 159.
Judith, 101.
Justice, 71.

Kinematograph, 2, 13, 16.
King Lear, 58.
King's House Theatre, 85.
Kingsway, the, 3, 151.
Knox, John, 144.

Lady Frederick, 163.
Lancelot, 186.
Leicester, Lord, 2.
Lyttelton, Dr., 15.
Lytton, Lord, 183.

Macbeth, 50.
MacEvoy, Charles, 170, 172.
Macready, W. C., 2, 66.
Madras House, The, 71, 176.
Maeterlinck, M., 101.
Magistrate, The, 156.
Man and Superman, 163.

Man of Honour, The, 163.
Manchester Playgoer, 118, 118 n.
Marrying of Anne Leete, The, 175, 176, 177, 178, 180.
Marx, Karl, 143.
Mask, The, 119.
Masque or pageant, 167, 172.
Maude, Cyril, 36, 155.
Maugham, Somerset, 155, 163.
Measure for Measure, 101.
Mid-Channel, 157.
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, 61.
Milestones, 35, 77.
Mind the Paint Girl, 157.
Mozart, W. A., 49.
Mrs. Warren's Profession, 98, 142.
Murder of Alice, The, 85.
Musical comedy, 2, 12.
Music-hall, 2, 4, 6.

National Memorial Theatre, 25, 35, 62, 63, 70, 71, 75, 87, 90, 110, 132, 175.
National Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. *See* National Memorial Theatre.
National State Theatre. *See* National Memorial Theatre.
"Naturalism," 113, etc.
Naturalism, method of, 65–66, 112 seq.
New Royalty, 77.
Nickleby, Nicholas, 85.
Nietzsche, F., 143.
Nora Helmer, 176.

Œdipus Rex, 44.
"Oncomers," the, 40.

Pageant or masque, 167.
Palace Theatre, 5, 7, 9.
Palace of Variety. *See* Music-hall.
Pater, Walter, 143.
Patience, 104.
Paula Tanqueray, 158.
Peaseblossom, Master, 30, 34, 38, 41.
Peel, Sir R., 94.
Perdita, 178.
Perplexed Husband, The, 163.
Pheidias, 47.
Phillpotts, Eden, 101.
Picture Palace. *See* also Kinematograph.
Pinero, Sir Arthur, 108, 155, 156.
"Pioneers," the, 40.
Playhouse, 36.
Poel, William, 61, 149.
Preserving Mr. Panmure, 157.
Producer, the, 43–56.
Production, 43–56.
Published plays, 106.
Purcell, H., 48, 52.

Rabelais, F., 154.
Racine, J., 115, 126, 127.
Rag-Time-Band, 80.
Ramsden, Roebuck, 84.
Raphael, 47, 51.
"Realism," 113, 115.
Redford, G. A., 14.
Rehearsal, The, 124.
Reinhardt, Professor M., 7, 11, 44, 60, 61.
Repertory players, 36.
Repertory system, 75.
Return of the Prodigal, 146.
Robertson, Tom, 103, 156.
"Romanticism," 113.
Rothenstein, W., 60.
Rousseau, J. J., 184.
Rutherford and Son, 35.

St. James' Theatre, 7, 109, 149.
Sardou, V., 156, 157.
Sartorious, Blanche, 137.
Saturday Review, The, 120.
Schnitzler, Arthur, 7, 11, 158.
Schoolmistress, The, 156.
Schopenhauer, A., 143.
Second Mrs. Tanqueray, 144, 156, 163.
Shakespeare, William, 2, 13, 25, 30, 39, 41, 44, 47, 48, 50, 59, 60, 61, 69, 71, 72, 83, 98, 101, 113, 115, 116, 120, 122, 127, 129, 177.